This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

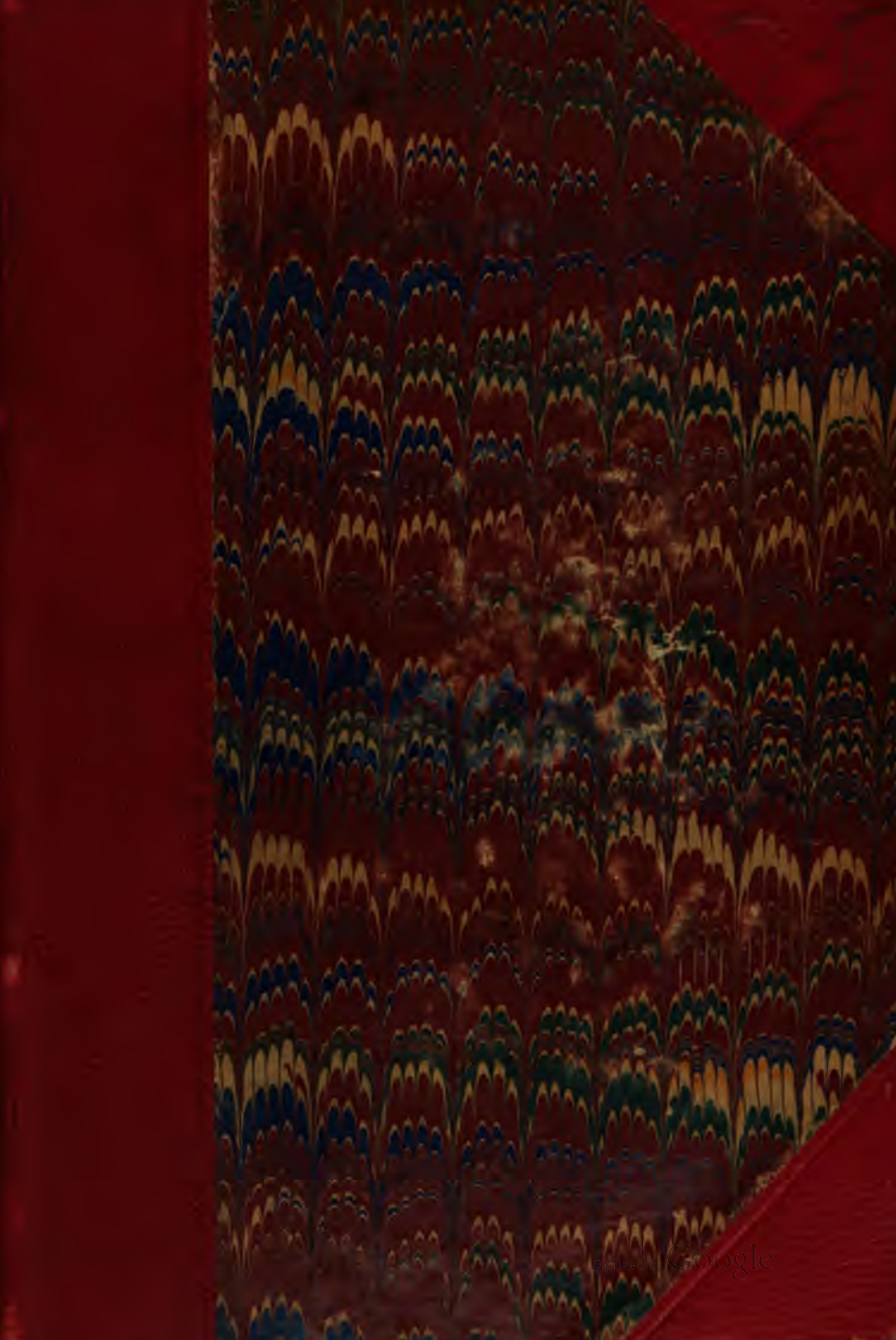
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



US 2092.37

A

Harvard College Library

FROM THE

BRIGHT LEGACY.

One half the income from this Legacy, which was received in 1880 under the will of

JONATHAN BROWN BRIGHT

of Waltham, Massachusetts, is to be expended for books for the College Library. The other half of the income is devoted to scholarships in Harvard University for the benefit of descendants of

HENRY BRIGHT, JR.,

who died at Watertown, Massachusetts, in 1686. In the absence of such descendants, other persons are eligible to the scholarships. The will requires that this announcement shall be made in every book added to the Library under its provisions.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE HISTORY OF OUR NAVY

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

JOHN PAUL JONES.

From a mezzotint of the painting by Notté.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE HISTORY OF OUR NAVY

FROM ITS ORIGIN TO THE PRESENT DAY

1775–1897

BY

JOHN R. SPEARS

AUTHOR OF "THE PORT OF MISSING SHIPS," "THE GOLD DIGGINGS OF CAPE HORN," ETC.

WITH MORE THAN FOUR HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS
MAPS AND DIAGRAMS

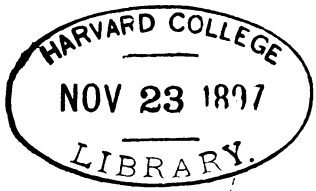
IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME I.

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1897

Digitized by Google

US 2092.39
~~5815.56~~
A



Bright gund
(H.N.)

COPYRIGHT, 1897, BY
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

MANHATTAN PRESS
474 W. BROADWAY
NEW YORK

Digitized by Google

TO ALL WHO WOULD SEEK PEACE
AND PURSUE IT

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

PREFACE

THIS work is to tell the story of the American navy from the time when the fathers of the nation first conceived the idea of sending warships to sea "at the expense of the Continent" down to this year of our Lord 1897. It seems to me that the memory of what the naval heroes of the nation have done is worth preserving if only as a mark of gratitude—gratitude to the men whose sole incentive was patriotism and whose only greed was for honor. It seems worth while to tell anew the story of these men who had a noble ambition. It may help to prevent their race becoming extinct. But if that appeal does not secure the attention of the reader, let me say that self-interest demands that he heed the lessons in the story of the navy.

Because naval officers and their friends are very properly jealous of their rights in the matter of titles and rank, it is necessary to explain that officers have very often held one rank on the naval list while entitled to a higher

Digitized by Google

one by courtesy. Farragut was a midshipman under Porter, and yet, for a time, while in command of a captured ship, was by courtesy called captain. Lieutenant Macdonough was entitled to the title of commodore while in command on Lake Champlain. I have in nearly all instances used the title which courtesy demanded, but, for reasons which I hope will be apparent, the title of actual rank seemed proper at times.

To sum it all up, I am bound to say I have tried to tell the story accurately, interestingly, and usefully. If there are errors, they are unpardonable blunders; if the story lacks interest or usefulness, the fault is entirely with the writer. Any story of the navy—even this one—should rouse the enthusiasm of the patriot because of the stirring character of the deeds that must be described; and I believe that when the reader has considered it well, he will conclude, as I do, that because of the growth of civilization and the spread of the pure doctrines of Christianity throughout the world, and the progress in the arts of making guns and armor-plate in the United States, we shall continue to pursue, for many years, our daily vocations in peace.

J. R. S.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER I. ORIGIN OF THE AMERICAN NAVY . 1

The Curious Chain of Events that Led to the Creation of a National Sea Power—The *Gaspé* Captured by Men Armed with Paving-stones—Tea Destroyed in Boston—The Battle of Lexington and the Attack of the Machias Haymakers on the *Margaretta*—British Vengeance on Defenceless Portland and its Effect on the Continental Congress—The "Colonial Navy" Distinguished from the Temporary Cruisers—The First Officers and the First Ships of the American Navy—John Paul Jones and the First Naval Ensign—The Significant "Don't Tread on me"—Putting the First American Naval Ships in Commission.

CHAPTER II. FIRST CRUISE OF THE YANKEE SQUADRON 48

A Fairly Successful Raid on New Providence, but they Let a British Sloop-of-war Escape—Character of the First Naval Commander-in-chief and of the Material with which he had to Work—Esek Hopkins, and his Record as Commander of the Fleet—Crews Untrained and Devoid of *Esprit de Corps*—Good Courage, but a Woeful Lack of other Needed Qualities—Hopkins Dismissed for Disobedience of Orders.

CHAPTER III. ALONG SHORE IN 1776 . . . 63

Brilliant Deeds by the First Heroes of the American Navy—Why Nicholas Biddle Entered Port with but Five of the Original Crew of the *Andrea Doria*—Richard Dale on the sleek *Lexington*—The *Racehorse* Captured in an even Fight—Captain Lambert Wickes in the *Reprisal* Beats off a Large Vessel—John Paul Jones in his Earlier Commands—A Smart Race with the Frigate *Solebay*—Sixteen Prizes in Forty-seven Days in Cape Breton Region—Poking Fun at the Frigate *Milford*—The Valuable *Mellish*—An Able Fighter who Lacked Political Influence.

Digitized by Google

PAGE

CHAPTER IV. HE SAW "THE COUNTENANCE OF THE ENEMY" 84

The Story of Arnold's Extraordinary Fight against Overwhelming Odds on Lake Champlain—A Thousand Sailors, of whom Seven-tenths were Picked Men, Armed with the Heaviest Guns, were Pitted under a Courageous Leader against 700 Yankees, chiefly Hay-makers, Poorly Armed and with Insufficient Ammunition—Savages with Scalping Knives Aided the British—A Desperate Struggle at the End—The Best All-around Fighter under Washington.

CHAPTER V. UNDER THE CRAGS OF THE "TIGHT LITTLE ISLE" 112

The Saucy Yankee Cruisers in British Waters—When Franklin Sailed for France—Wickes in the *Reprisal* on the Irish Coast—Narrow Escape from a Liner—A Plucky English Lieutenant—Harsh Fate of the Americans in the British Prison—Starved by Act of Parliament—Deeds of the Gallant Connyngham—Well-named Cruisers—A Surprise at a Breakfast Table—Taking Prizes Daily—Why Forty French Ships Loaded in the Thames—Insurance Rates never before Known.

CHAPTER VI. JOHN PAUL JONES AND THE *RANGER* 134

The First Ship that Carried the Stars and Stripes—Dash at a Convoy that Failed—When the Dutch were Browbeaten—The *Ranger* Sent on a Cruise in English Waters—A Ship Taken off Dublin—The Raid on Whitehaven—When one Brave Man Cowed more than a Thousand—The Whole Truth about Lord Selkirk's Silverware, with the Noble Lord's Expression of Gratitude when he Got it Back—How Captain Jones Missed the *Drake* at First, but Got her Later on in a Fair and Well-fought Battle.

CHAPTER VII. THE FIRST SUBMARINE WARSHIP . 157

It was Small and Ineffective, but it Contained the Germ of a Mighty Power that is as yet Undeveloped—When Nicholas Biddle Died—He was a Man of the Spirit of an Ideal American Naval Officer—Fought the Ship against Overwhelming Odds till Blown out of the Water—The Loss of the *Hancock*—An American Captain Dismissed for a Good Reason—Captain Rathburne at New Providence—Loss of the *Virginia*—Captain Barry's Notable Exploit—With

Digitized by Google

Twenty-seven Men to Help him, he Captured a Schooner of Ten Guns by Boarding from Small Boats in Broad Daylight, although the Schooner was Manned by 116 Sailors and Soldiers.

PAGE

CHAPTER VIII. PRIVATEERS OF THE REVOLUTION 196

A Tale of the American Patriots who Went Afloat outside of the Regular Navy—Their Part in Driving the British from Boston—Remarkable Work of the *Lee*—Truxton as a Privateer—Daring Capt. John Foster Williams—When Capt. Daniel Waters, with the *Thorn* of Sixteen Guns, Whipped Two Ships that Carried Thirty-four Guns between them—Great was Joshua Barney—The Story of the most Famous State Cruisers of the Revolution—Won against Greater Odds than were Encountered by any Successful Sea Captain of the War—British Account of the Work of American Privateers—The Horrors of the *Jersey* Prison Ship.

CHAPTER IX. JOHN PAUL JONES AND THE *BONHOMME RICHARD* 227

A Condemned Indiaman, Ill-shaped and Rotten, Fitted as a Man-o'-war—A Disheartening Cruise with Incapable and Mutinous Associates—Attempt to Take Leith, and the Scotch Parson's Prayer—Meeting the *Serapis*—When John Paul Jones had "not yet Begun to Fight"; when he had "Got her now"; when he would not "Surrender to a Drop of Water"—Ready Wit of Richard Dale—Work of a Bright Marine—A Battle Won by Sheer Pluck and Persistence.

CHAPTER X. AFTER THE *SERAPIS* SURRENDERED 260

Richard Dale too Bright for the British Lieutenant—A Fair Estimate of Captain Pearson of the *Serapis*—The Treachery of Landais—Remarkable Escape from Texel—Honors for the Victor—"The Fame of the Brave Outlives him; his Portion is Immortality."

CHAPTER XI. THE YEAR 1779 IN AMERICAN WATERS 280

Lucky Raids of British Transports and Merchantmen—Disastrous Expedition to the Penobscot—The *Trumbull's* Good Fight with the *Watt*—The First Yankee Line-of-battle-ship—When Nicholson, with a Wrecked Ship and Fifty Men, Fought for an Hour against Two Frigates, each of which was Superior to the Yankee Ship—Captain Barry's Exasperating Predicament in a Calm—The Last Naval Battle of the Revolution.

Digitized by Google

PAGE

CHAPTER XII. BUILDING A NEW NAVY . . 303

When England, in her Efforts to Wrest Commerce from the Americans, Incited the Pirates of Africa to Activity, she Compelled the Building of the Fleet that was, in the End, to Bring her Humility of which she had never Dreamed—Deeds of the Barbary Corsairs—American Naval Policy as Laid down by Joshua Humphreys—The Wonderful New Frigates—Troubles with the French Cruisers on the American Coasts—Trick of a Yankee Captain to Save a Ship—A Midshipman who Died at his Post—Capture of the *Insurgent*—A Long Watch over the French Prisoners—Escape of a Twice-beaten Ship—The Valiant Senez—Story of Isaac Hull and the Lucky *Enterprise.*

CHAPTER XIII. WAR WITH BARBARY PIRATES . 333

A Squadron under Richard Dale Sent to the Mediterranean—The Dey of Algiers became Friendly, but the Bashaw of Tripoli Showed Fight—Fierce Battle between the Schooner *Enterprise* and the Treacherous Crew of the Polacre *Tripoli*—Slaughter of the Pirates—Tripoli Blockaded—Grounding and Loss of the *Philadelphia.*

CHAPTER XIV. DECATUR AND THE *PHILADELPHIA* 345

Story of the Brave Men who Disguised a Ketch as a Merchantman and Sailed into the Harbor of Tripoli by Night, Drew up alongside the Captured *Philadelphia*, and then, to the Order "Boarders Away!" Climbed over the Rail and through the Ports, and with Cutlass and Pike Drove the Pirates into the Sea or to a Worse Fate—"The most Bold and Daring Act of the Age."

CHAPTER XV. HAND-TO-HAND WITH THE PIRATES 359

A Fight against Odds of Three Gunboats to One—Decatur and Macdonough Leading the Boarders—Cold-blooded Murder and the Vengeance that Followed—When Reuben James Won Fame—Eleven against Forty-three in a Hand-to-hand Struggle, and the Remarkable Result—The Handy *Constitution*—Fired their Gun as the Boat Sank under them—When Somers and his Mates Went to their Death in a Fireship—End of the War with the Pirates.

CHAPTER XVI. WHY WE FOUGHT IN 1812 . . 383

A Stirring Tale of the Outrages Perpetrated on American Citizens by the Press-gangs of the British Navy—Horrors of Life on Ships

Digitized by Google

where the Officers Found Pleasure in the Use of the Cat—Doomed to Slavery for Life—Impressed from the *Baltimore*—A British Seaman's Joke and its Ghastly Result—The British Admiralty's Way of Dealing with Deliberate Murder in American Waters—Assault of the *Leopard* on the *Chesapeake* to Compel American Seamen to Return to the Slavery they had Escaped—Building Harbor-defence Boats to Protect American Seamen from Outrage on the High Seas—Other Good Reasons for Going to War.

PAGE

APPENDIX 415

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

JOHN PAUL JONES. (From a mezzotint of the painting by Notté), ... *Frontispiece*

AN EARLY AMERICAN FLOATING BATTERY, ... 1

COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS. (From a French engraving of the portrait by Wilkinson), ... 3

THE FIRST NAVAL FLAGS, ... 4

DESTRUCTION OF THE SCHOONER *GASPÉ*, 1772. (From an engraving by Rogers of the painting by McNevin), . . 7

THE STATE HOUSE AT NEWPORT, SHOWING THE *GASPÉ* AFFAIR. (From an engraving in Hinton's "History of the United States"), ... 10

THE "BOSTON TEA-PARTY." (From an old engraving), . 13

A BRITISH ARMED SLOOP. (From a very rare engraving, showing the first lighthouse erected in the United States—on Little Brewster Island, Boston Harbor), . . . 19

A BRIG OF WAR LOWERING A BOAT. (From a picture drawn and engraved by Baugean), ... 29

THE ADMIRALTY SEAL, ... 33

THE FOUNDERS OF THE AMERICAN NAVY. (Drawn by I. W. Taber—the portraits from engravings), ... 37

VESSEL OF WAR SALUTING, WITH THE YARDS MANNED. (From an old French engraving), ... 40

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER FROM ABRAHAM WHIPPLE TO GENERAL LINCOLN DURING THE SIEGE OF CHARLESTON. (From the original at the Lenox Library), ... 42

NICHOLAS BIDDLE. (From an engraving by Edwin), . . 45

A FRIGATE CHASING A SMALL BOAT. (From an old French engraving), ... 48

A LETTER FROM ESEK HOPKINS. (From the original at the Lenox Library), ... 50

A CORVETTE. (From an old French engraving), ... 52

Digitized by Google

PAGE

COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS. (From a very rare English engraving), ... 55
AN ENGLISH "SEVENTY-FOUR" AND A FRIGATE COMING TO ANCHOR. (From an old engraving), ... 59
JOHN BARRY. (From an engraving of the portrait by Chappel), 65
FACSIMILE OF ACCOUNT BETWEEN DUDLEY SALTONSTALL AND ELISHA HINMAN. (From the original at the Lenox Library), 67
ST. PIERRE, MARTINIQUE. (From an old engraving), . . 70
JOHN PAUL JONES. (From an engraving by Longacre of the portrait by C. W. Peale), ... 75
BURLINGTON BAY ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN. (From an old engraving in the collection of Mr. W. C. Crane), facing . 84
SIR GUY CARLETON. (From an engraving by A. H. Ritchie), 86
GEN. BENEDICT ARNOLD. (Drawn from life at Philadelphia by Du Simitier), ... 88
THE *ROYAL SAVAGE*. (After an old painting), ... 90
THE BATTLE OF LAKE CHAMPLAIN, ... 92
PLAN OF THE ACTION OF OCTOBER 11, 1776, ... 93
MAP OF THE FIGHT ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN, 1776, ... 94
THE FIGHT ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN, OCTOBER 13, 1776. (From a contemporary English engraving), ... 97
A VIEW ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN, SHOWING THE FIGHT OF 1776. (From Hinton's "History of the United States"), . . 101
BROADSIDE DESCRIBING THE ENGAGEMENT ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN. (From a copy at the Lenox Library), . . 106–109
THE *PHOENIX* AND THE *ROSE* ENGAGING THE FIRE-SHIPS ON THE HUDSON RIVER. (From a lithograph of the painting by Serres after a sketch by Sir James Wallace), . . . 115
JOHN BAZELEY. (From an engraving by Ridley of a miniature by Langdon), ... 120
JOHN PAUL JONES'S COMMISSION, ... 136
MAP OF THE BRITISH ISLES. (Showing Captain Jones's two voyages and the route of the *Reprisal*), ... 139
AN ENGLISH CARICATURE OF JOHN PAUL JONES. (Published in London, October 22, 1779), ... 143
"PAUL JONES THE PIRATE." (From an old engraving in the collection of Mr. W. C. Crane), ... 149
MAP OF THE AMERICAN COAST, ... 161
SIGNATURES OF JOHN MANLY AND HECTOR MCNEIL, . . 181
FACSIMILE OF A LETTER FROM THOMAS THOMPSON TO CAPTAIN MCNEIL. (From the original at the Lenox Library), 183–4

Digitized by Google

PAGE

A TYPICAL NASSAU FORT—FORT FINCASTLE. (From a photograph by Rau), ... 187

AN ENGLISH FRIGATE OF FORTY GUNS. (From an engraving by Verico), ... 191

"A PROCLAMATION." (From the copy at the Lenox Library), 198

"AN ORDINANCE ASCERTAINING WHAT CAPTURES ON WATER SHALL BE LAWFUL." (From the copy at the Lenox Library), ... 202

ALEXANDER MURRAY. (From an engraving by Edwin of the painting by Wood), ... 208

JOSHUA BARNEY. (From an engraving by Gross after a miniature by Isabey), ... 210

FIGHT OF THE *HYDER ALI* WITH THE *GENERAL MONK*, 1782. (From a painting by Crépin at the Naval Academy, Annapolis), ... 213

A RELIC OF TWO REVOLUTIONARY CAPTAINS—BILL OF LADING FOR JOHN BARRY SIGNED BY JOSHUA BARNEY. (From the original at the Lenox Library), ... 216

"THE HOWES ASLEEP IN PHILADELPHIA"—A CARICATURE DRAWN FORTH BY THE DOINGS OF REVOLUTIONARY PRIVATEERS, ... 219

THE BRITISH PRISON SHIP *JERSEY*. (From an old wood-cut), ... 221

A PERMIT TO VISIT ONE OF THE PRISON SHIPS. (From the original at the Lenox Library), ... 223

MAP OF THE WALE BOGT AND ITS VICINITY, ... 225

A RELIC OF THE PRISON SHIPS: ENTRANCE TO THE VAULT OF THE *MARTYRS*. (From an old wood-cut), . . . 226

RICHARD DALE. (From an engraving by Dodson after the portrait by Wood), ... 231

PIERRE LANDAIS. (From a copy, at the Lenox Library, of a miniature), ... 236

LEITH PIER AND HARBOR. (From an old engraving), . . 239

JOHN PAUL JONES. (From an engraving by Guttenberg, after a drawing by Notté, in the collection of Mr. W. C. Crane), 242

THE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE *BONHOMME RICHARD* and *SERAPIS*. (From an engraving by Hamilton of a drawing by Collier), ... 246

DIAGRAM OF THE *SERAPIS–BONHOMME RICHARD* BATTLE, . 249

THE *SERAPIS* AND THE *BONHOMME RICHARD*. (From an engraving by Lerpinière after a drawing by Fitler), . . 252

Digitized by Google

PAGE

PAUL JONES CAPTURING THE *SERAPIS*. (From an engraving of the picture by Chappel), ... 258
CAPT. SIR RICHARD PEARSON. (From an engraving by Cook), ... 261
JOHN PAUL JONES. (After a rare engraving), ... 263
SIGNATURE OF RICHARD DALE. (From a letter at the Lenox Library), ... 266
A LETTER FROM PIERRE LANDAIS. (From the original at the Lenox Library), ... 268
JOHN PAUL JONES. (From a miniature recently found [1897] in a cellar at the Naval Academy), ... 269
JOHN PAUL JONES (IN COCKED HAT). (From a very rare engraving at the Navy Department, Washington), . . 271
JOHN PAUL JONES. (From an engraving by Chapman in the collection of Mr. W. C. Crane), ... 273
JOHN PAUL JONES'S MEDAL, ... 276
JOHN PAUL JONES AND THE *SERAPIS* FIGHT. (From an engraving in the collection of Mr. W. C. Crane), . . . 278
A LETTER FROM JOHN PAUL JONES TO THOMAS JEFFERSON. (From the original at the Lenox Library), ... 279
SIGNATURE OF HOYSTED HACKER. (From a letter at the Lenox Library), ... 283
SIR GEORGE COLLIER'S VICTORY IN PENOBSCOT BAY, 1779. (From a very rare engraving at the Lenox Library), . . 285
MAP OF THE ATTACK ON THE PENOBSCOT FORT. (From a contemporary map at the Lenox Library), . . . 288–9
SIGNATURE OF SAMUEL NICHOLSON. (From a letter at the Lenox Library), ... 290
JAMES NICHOLSON. (After a miniature in the possession of Miss Josephine L. Stevens), ... 296
AN OLD NAVAL ORDER. (From the original at the Lenox Library), ... 301
A MEDITERRANEAN CORSAIR ANCHORING. (From a picture drawn and engraved by Baugean), ... 306
JOHN BARRY'S COMMISSION AS COMMANDER OF THE *UNITED STATES*. (From the original at the Naval Academy, Annapolis), ... 313
A FRENCH VESSEL OF 118 GUNS, A CENTURY AGO. (From an engraving by Canali), ... 318
DIAGRAM OF THE *INSURGENT-CONSTELLATION* BATTLE, . . 321
A FRENCH VESSEL OF 120 GUNS. (From an engraving by Orio), 322

Digitized by Google

PAGE

MEDAL AWARDED TO THOMAS TRUXTON, ... 325
PORTRAIT OF TRUXTON AND PRESIDENT ADAMS'S LETTER TO HIM. (From a lithograph at the Naval Academy, Annapolis), ... 326
TRUXTON'S MEDAL AND THE CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTION AWARDING IT TO HIM, ... 327
THE *SALLY* ATTACKED BY A SEA-SERPENT OFF THE SHORE OF LONG ISLAND. (From a French engraving), . . 331
A FRENCH CUTTER OF 16 GUNS. (From an engraving by Merlo), 332
BENJAMIN STODDERT. (From a painting at the Navy Department, Washington), ... 334
"CAPTAIN STERRETT IN THE *ENTERPRISE*, PAYING TRIBUTE TO *TRIPOLI*." (From an old wood-cut), ... 337
A SCHOONER-OF-WAR, LIKE THE *ENTERPRISE*. (From a wood-cut in the "Kedge Anchor"), ... 339
MAP OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA, ... 340
WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE. (From an engraving by Edwin), . 341
STEPHEN DECATUR. (From an engraving by Osborn of the portrait by White), ... 347
BURNING OF THE FRIGATE *PHILADELPHIA* BY DECATUR. (From an old wood-cut), ... 352
THE BLOWING UP OF THE FRIGATE *PHILADELPHIA*. (From an engraving in Waldo's "Decatur"), ... 355
A PIECE OF THE *PHILADELPHIA'S* STERN. (From the original piece at the Naval Institute, Annapolis), ... 358
EDWARD PREBLE. (From an engraving by Kelly of the picture in Faneuil Hall, Boston), ... 360
DECATUR AVENGING THE MURDER OF HIS BROTHER. (From an engraving in Waldo's "Decatur"), ... 363
REUBEN JAMES SAVING DECATUR'S LIFE. (From an engraving of the picture by Chappel), ... 365
JOHN TRIPPE. (After a French engraving), ... 367
THE BATTLE OF TRIPOLI, AUGUST 3, 1804. (From the painting by Corné, 1805, at the Naval Academy, Annapolis), ... 369
MAP OF THE HARBOR OF TRIPOLI, ... 372
THE EXPLOSION OF THE *INTREPID*. (From an old engraving), 375
PREBLE'S MEDAL, ... 379
"THE PRESS-GANG IMPRESSING A YOUNG WATERMAN ON HIS MARRIAGE DAY." (From an English engraving, illustrating an old song), ... 386

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

An Early American Floating Battery.

THE HISTORY OF OUR NAVY

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF THE AMERICAN NAVY

THE CURIOUS CHAIN OF EVENTS THAT LED TO THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL SEA POWER—THE *GASPÉ* CAPTURED BY MEN ARMED WITH PAVING-STONES—TEA DESTROYED IN BOSTON—THE BATTLE OF LEXINGTON AND THE ATTACK OF THE MACHIAS HAYMAKERS ON THE *MARGARETTA*—BRITISH VENGEANCE ON DEFENCELESS PORTLAND AND ITS EFFECT ON THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS—THE "COLONIAL NAVY" DISTINGUISHED FROM THE TEMPORARY CRUISERS—THE FIRST OFFICERS AND THE FIRST SHIPS OF THE AMERICAN NAVY—JOHN PAUL JONES AND THE FIRST NAVAL ENSIGN—THE SIGNIFICANT "DON'T TREAD ON ME"—PUTTING THE FIRST AMERICAN NAVAL SHIPS IN COMMISSION.

Of all the dates in American history not yet so commemorated, there is none so well worthy of recognition as a national holiday as the 22d of December; for it was on December 22, 1775, that the American navy came into existence. And there is no part of the story of the American nation of more thrilling interest than that including the events which

Digitized by Google

compelled the establishment of this branch of the public service, nor is there any part of the nation's story as a whole that so stirs the patriotic pride of the American people as that which tells of the deeds of the heroes whose names have been inscribed upon the American naval registers.

It is a grateful task to recount once more how it was that an American navy was demanded for the preservation of American liberties, and what has been accomplished by that navy since the day when Commodore Esek Hopkins received his commission, and then stood by on the deck of his flagship while John Paul Jones flung to the breeze the broad folds of the flag that bore as a symbol the picture of a rattlesnake coiled to strike, with the significant and appropriate motto,

"DON'T TREAD ON ME."

The salt-water Lexington, that is to say, the first fight afloat of the Revolutionary war, occurred on the night of June 17, 1772, in the waters of Rhode Island, and the fact that it was in Rhode Island will be recalled later on. The war of Great Britain against France for dominion in America, "though crowned with success, had engendered a progeny of discontents in her colonies." "Her policy toward them from the beginning had been purely

Digitized by Google

Commodore Esek Hopkins.

From a French engraving of the portrait by Wilkinson.

Digitized by Google

commercial." And that is to say that the English, even in their dealings with their own colonies, were animated solely by greed. The stamp act; the levying of taxes on intercolonial commerce; the imposition of duties on glass, pasteboard, painters' colors, and tea, "to be collected on the arrival of the articles in the colonies"; worse yet, the "empowering of naval officers to enforce the acts of trade and navigation," grew out of "the spirit of trade which always aims to get the best of the bargain," regardless of right.

The First Naval Flags.

It was through this empowering of naval officers to enforce the acts of trade and navigation that the first sea-fight of the Revolution occurred. A vessel of war—presumably a ship—had been stationed in the waters of Rhode Island, with a schooner of 102 tons burden, called the *Gaspé*, armed with six three-pounders, to serve as a tender. The *Gaspé* was under the command of Lieut. William Duddingstone. Duddingstone was particularly offensive in his treatment of the coasting vessels, every one of which was, in his

Digitized by Google

view, a smuggler. He had a crew of twenty-seven men.

On June 17, 1772, a Providence packet, named the *Hannah* and commanded by Captain Linzee, came in sight of these two war-vessels while she was on her regular passage from New York to Providence. As the *Hannah* ranged up near the war-vessels she was ordered to heave to in order that her papers might be examined, but Captain Linzee being favored by a smart southerly wind that was rapidly carrying him out of range of the man-of-war guns, held fast on his course.

At this the schooner *Gaspé* was ordered to follow and bring back the offending sloop, and with all sail drawing, she obeyed the order. For a matter of twenty-five miles that was as eager and as even a race as any sailorman would care to see, but when that length of course had been sailed over, the racers found themselves close up at the Providence bar. The Yankee knew his ground as well as he knew the deck of his sloop, but the captain of the *Gaspé* was unfamiliar with it. A few minutes later the shoal-draft *Hannah* was crossing the bar at a point where she could barely scrape over, and the deeper-draft *Gaspé*, in trying to follow at full speed, was grounded hard and fast.

To make matters still worse for the *Gaspé*,

Digitized by Google

the tide had just begun to run ebb; not for many hours could her crew hope to float her.

Leaving the stranded schooner to heel with the falling tide, Captain Linzee drove on with the wind to Providence, where he landed at the wharf and spread the story of his trouble with the coast guard. Had it happened in the days before the French war, or before the persistent efforts of the British ministry to levy unjust taxes on the colonies had roused such intense opposition in New England, this affair would have been considered as a good joke on a revenue cutter, and that would have been the end of it so far as the people of Providence were concerned.

Now, however, the matter was taken in a most serious light. As the sun went down, the town drummer appeared on the streets, and with the long roll and tattoo by which public meetings were called he gathered the men of the town under a horse-shed that stood near one of the larger stores overlooking the water. While yet the people were coming to the rendezvous, a man disguised as an Indian appeared on the roof and invited all "stout hearts" to meet him on the wharf at nine o'clock, disguised as he was.

As one may readily believe, nearly every man of Providence came to the pier at the

Digitized by Google

Destruction of the Schooner *Gaspé*, 1772.

From an engraving by Rogers of the painting by McNevin.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

appointed hour. From this crowd sixty-four men were selected. They chose as their commander, so tradition asserts, Abraham Whipple, who, later on, became one of the first-made captains of the American navy, and then all embarked in eight long-boats gathered from the different vessels lying at the wharves, and pulled away for the *Gaspé*.

That was a most remarkable expedition in the matter of armament, for, although there were a few firearms in the boats, the crews depended for the most part on a liberal supply of round paving-stones that they carried for weapons of offense.

It was at two o'clock in the morning when this galley-fleet arrived in sight of the stranded *Gaspé*. The tide had turned by this time, and the schooner had begun to right herself somewhat. A sentinel, pacing to and fro with some difficulty, saw the approaching boats and hailed them. A shower of paving-stones was the most effective if not the only reply he received, and he tumbled down below precipitately. The rattle and crash of the paving-stones on the deck routed the crew from their berths, and, running hastily on deck, the captain of the *Gaspé* fired a pistol point-blank at his assailants.

At that a single musket was fired from the boats, by whom will never be told, and the

Digitized by Google

captain dropped with a bullet in his thigh. Then the boats closed about the stranded vessel and their crews swarmed over the rails. The sailors of the *Gaspé* strove to resist the onslaught, but they were quickly knocked down and secured.

As soon as this was done the schooner was effectually fired, and her captors, with their prisoners, pulled away; but they remained within sight until the early dawn appeared, when the schooner blew up, and the boats were rowed hastily home with the tide.

The State House at Newport, Showing the *Gaspé* Affair.

From an engraving in Hinton's History of the United States.

Digitized by Google

The indignation of the British officials over this assault on a naval vessel was so great that a reward of £1,000 was offered for the leader of the expedition, with £500 more and a free pardon to any one of the offenders who would turn informer. But, "notwithstanding a Commission of Inquiry, under the great seal of England, sat with that object, from January to June, during the year 1773," not enough evidence was obtained to warrant the arrest of a single man.

Although it was not an affair of the sea, strictly speaking, it is worth recalling here that within six months after this Commission of Inquiry had failed to learn the names of the men, disguised as Indians, who had burned the *Gaspé*, another party of men in another colony disguised themselves as Indians, and helped amazingly in making the history of the times. It was on the night of Friday, the 17th of December, 1773, as the reader will remember. The ship *Dartmouth*, laden with tea, was lying at her wharf in Boston. She had been lying there since the 28th of the preceding month, and during all those days the people of Boston had labored unceasingly to get her away to sea without discharging her cargo. It is even recorded that "the urgency of the business in hand overcame the sabbatarian scruples of the people," and that in Bos-

Digitized by Google

ton! Meetings too great for "the Cradle of Liberty" (Faneuil Hall) were adjourned to the Old South Meeting-House. The people were "determined not to act (in offense) until the last legal method of relief should have been tried and found wanting." But at last, on the night of this 17th day of December, as the great throng of more than seven thousand people waited in and about "the church that was dimly lighted with candles," a messenger arrived from the British Governor to say that the last legal resource had failed. The Governor had refused to allow the ship to go. And "then, amid profound stillness, Samuel Adams arose and said, quietly but distinctly, 'this meeting can do nothing more to save the country.'"

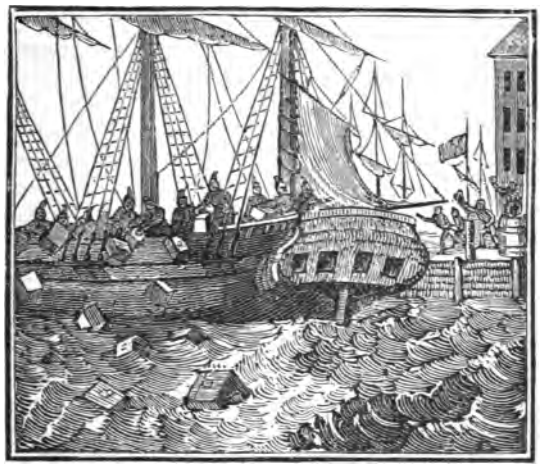
A war-whoop was heard a moment later without the church, and fifty men, disguised as Indians, just as Captain Whipple's men were when they fired the *Gaspé*—disguised as Indians because Captain Whipple's men had successfully eluded the British detectives—these fifty citizens of Boston ran away to the wharf where the *Dartmouth* lay.

One John Rowe had asked during the meeting earlier in the evening, "Who knows how tea will mingle with salt water?" He had now his opportunity to learn, for when the Indians reached the ship they quickly brought

Digitized by Google

her cargo on deck, and smashing open the chests with hatchets, tumbled the tea over the rail, while a vast host stood by in the moonlight and silently watched the work.

There was a significance in the silence of the work that might have been, but was not,



The "Boston Tea-Party."

From an old engraving.

heeded by those in authority, for it portrayed the feelings and the character of the men engaged in it, and foreshadowed the grim determination of the people during the conflict that was fast coming on.

Then followed, as the reader will remember very well, the Boston Port Bill closing that port. Then followed the bill by which any

Digitized by Google

magistrate, soldier, or revenue officer, accused of murder in Massachusetts, was to be taken to England for trial—a bill justly stigmatized as an act to encourage the soldiery in shooting down peaceful citizens. Then followed other acts equally or still more unjust and tyrannous that need not be mentioned here, the indignation of the colonists growing deeper as their distress under the oppression increased, until war was inevitable. And on the 19th of April, 1775, when the profane Pitcairn discharged his "elegant pistol" at the minute-men of the veteran Capt. John Parker on the village green in Lexington, war came.

Now, it was because of the stir caused by the story of this battle at Lexington that the second sea-fight of the Revolution occurred.

The reader must keep steadily in mind that not only were churches lighted by candles in those days, but mails were carried up and down the country by stage coaches and on horseback and by the oft-times slower water route—in sloops and schooners. The fight at Lexington occurred on April 19th, but the news of it did not reach Machias, Maine, until Saturday, the 9th of the following month. On that day word was brought by sea to Machias, telling how the British troops had fired on the minute-men, whose present offense was that they had refused to obey when Pitcairn had

Digitized by Google

shouted, "Disperse, ye villains! Damn you, why don't you disperse?" How some had been killed and others wounded by this first onslaught; how the minute-men had at first retreated and then gathered anew for the attack; how the British were first brought to a stand and then started in a retreat so swift that when at last they were rescued by fresh troops from Boston they fell to the ground with "their tongues hanging out of their mouths like those of dogs after a chase"—when all this was related in Machias, Maine, it stirred the men of the town to do a stroke against the oppressive ministry on their own account.

There was at this time in the port of Machias an armed schooner called the *Margaretta*, Captain Moore, in the service of the crown, with two unarmed sloops in convoy which were loading with lumber, according to the American account, for the British in Boston, but an English account speaks of the schooner as "a mast ship," *i.e.*, a vessel loading with logs suitable for the masts of a warship. As the reader will remember, the grants of land from the crown in those days always retained for the use of the crown all trees suitable for masts of ships that might be found on the land.

On hearing of the fight at Lexington the

Digitized by Google

bolder spirits of the town, considering that affair as the beginning of war, determined to capture the king's schooner *Margaretta*. Their first plan turned on the fact that the day after the news arrived was Sunday. The news was kept secret among those who laid the plan, and Captain Moore came ashore to attend church on Sundays as usual. Then these men started to capture him at the church, but their haste and excitement alarmed Captain Moore, and he jumped through the church window and fled to the beach, where he was protected by his schooner's guns.

On reaching his schooner, Captain Moore fired several shots over the town to intimidate the people; but not liking the looks of things on shore after the firing, he got up his anchor and dropped down-stream for a league, where he came to anchor foolishly under a high bank. The townspeople who had followed him, quickly took places on this bank, and a man named Foster called on him to surrender, but Captain Moore got his anchor again and ran out into the bay, apparently unmolested by those who had summoned him to surrender.

It looked as if the proposed capture would not be made. But on Monday morning (May 11, 1775) two of the young men of the town, Joseph Wheaton and Dennis O'Brien, met on

Digitized by Google

the wharf, when Wheaton proposed taking possession of one of the lumber sloops, raising a crew of volunteers and going after the *Margaretta.* Peter Calbreth and a man named Kraft happened along and agreed to join in, and the four went on board the sloop and took possession.

Three rousing cheers were given over the success of their effort, and that brought a crowd to the wharf—among the rest, Jeremiah O'Brien, "an athletic gallant man," to whom, as to a village leader, Wheaton explained the project.

"My boys, we can do it," said Jeremiah with enthusiasm, and at that every one in the throng skurried off for arms.

The equipment which they brought together for that cruise is worth describing in detail. They had twenty guns, of which one is described as a "wall-piece." It was a musket too heavy to hold offhand when fired; it needed a wall, so to speak, to support its weight when it was aimed. For all these guns they had but sixty bullets and sixty charges of powder —three loads for each weapon. In addition they carried thirteen pitchforks and twelve axes (a formidable weapon in the hands of a Maine man). For food they carried a few pieces of pork, a part of a bag of bread, and a barrel of water.

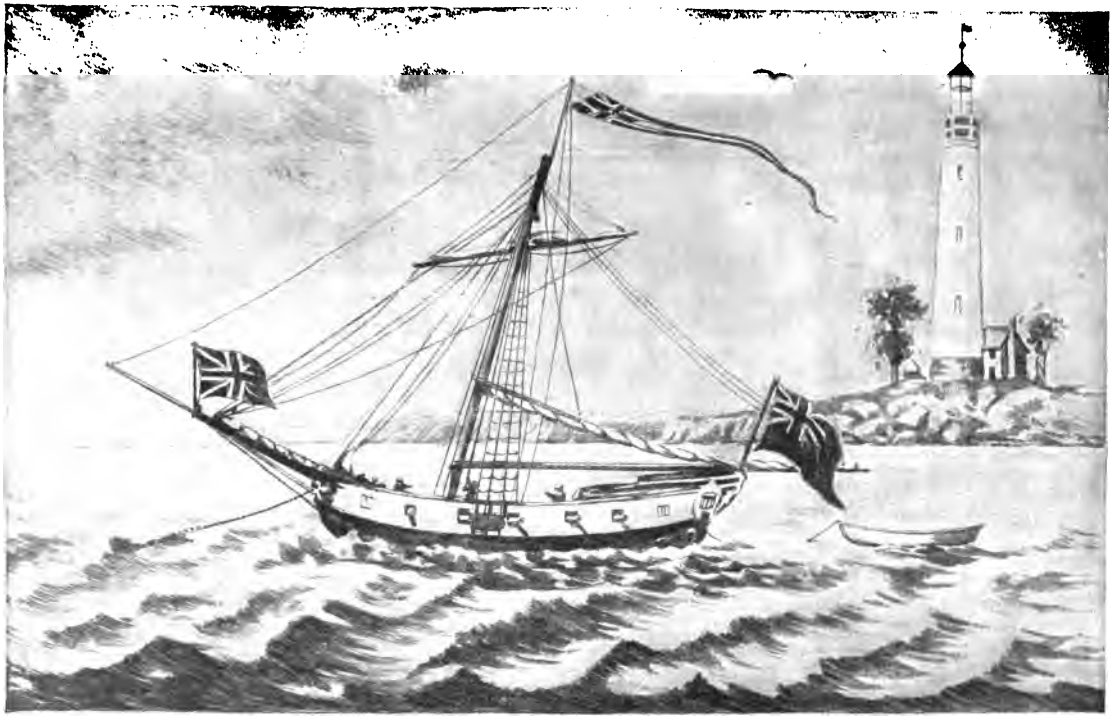
Digitized by Google

Out of a throng of volunteers thirty-five of the most athletic were selected to go, and, this done, they hoisted sail and boldly headed away before a northwest breeze to capture the *Margaretta.*

It should be noted here that these sloops were single-masted vessels, as was the one in the Providence affair. They were in form and rig very much like the one-masted vessels employed at the time of this writing (1897) in carrying brick from the yards on the Hudson River to New York City, but they were not nearly as large as the brick-carriers, though they probably stood as high out of water, if not higher. A "sloop of war" was a very different vessel, as will appear further on.

Captain Moore saw the sloop coming from afar, and realized that the crowd upon her deck meant trouble for him. So, being still anxious to avoid a conflict (just why he was anxious does not appear), he up anchor and once more ran away. But luck was against him—perhaps his flustrated state of mind brought him ill-luck. At any rate, although the wind was in the northwest and he was bound south, he got up his mainsail with the boom to starboard, and soon found himself obliged to jibe it over to port. With a fresh breeze that was a task needing care, and yet,

Digitized by Google



A British Armed Sloop

From a very rare engraving, showing the first lighthouse erected in the United States—on Little Brewster Island, Boston Harbor.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

when he came to swing the boom across, he let it go on the run, and it brought up against the backstays with such a shock that it was broken short off in the wake of the rigging.

Rendered desperate by this accident, Captain Moore now turned to a merchant schooner that he saw at anchor not far away, and bringing to alongside of her, he robbed her of her boom to replace his own and again headed for the open sea, and then, to still further aid his flight, cut adrift every one of his boats.

But it was all in vain, for the sloop was much the swifter vessel, and Captain Moore was at last compelled to fight.

The *Margaretta* was armed with four six-pounders and twenty swivels—short and thick guns firing a one-pound ball, and mounted on swivels placed on the vessel's rail. It was an armament that should have been more than sufficient to repel the Machias men armed with pitchforks and axes. Moreover, the crew of the *Margaretta* outnumbered that of the sloop. But there was a difference in the character of the two crews—a difference for which abundant cause will be shown further on—and the issue of the contest was never for a moment in doubt after the haymakers had gone afloat.

The first discharge of guns on the schooner

Digitized by Google

killed one man on the sloop. A man of the name of Knight on the sloop returned the fire, using the wall-piece. He was probably from the backwoods and a moose hunter, for he was bright enough and skilful enough to pick off the man at the schooner's helm. And that shot drove everybody off the schooner's quarter-deck, so she was left, as a sailor might say, to take charge of herself.

Then the schooner broached to, the sloop crashed into her, and the men from Machias, with swinging axes and poised pitchforks, climbed over her rail.

It is said for Captain Moore that at this point he fought gallantly, throwing hand-grenades "with considerable effect," but he was quickly shot to death, and then his crew surrendered.

In all, twenty men were killed and wounded in this fight, showing that it was a desperate conflict when once the two crews got within range of each other, man to man, for twenty was more than one-fourth of all engaged in it. The crew of the *Margaretta* numbered forty, all told.

On the *Margaretta* the captors found two wall-pieces, forty cutlasses, forty boarding axes, two boxes of hand-grenades, forty muskets, and twenty pistols, with an ample supply of powder and shot.

Digitized by Google

When one with a full knowledge of the naval tar's contempt for "a haymaker's mate" recalls the story of this Machias fight, he cannot help thinking that some of the crew of the *Margaretta* must have suffered as much in mind as they did from their wounds after being impaled on the two-pronged pikes—the pitchforks of these Yankee haymakers.

Not only was the fight between the *Margaretta's* crew and the haymakers interesting in itself; it was followed by consequences of the most important nature in connection with the establishment of the American navy.

The commander of the haymakers, elected in good American fashion after they were afloat, was Jeremiah O'Brien. Having secured the *Margaretta* and his prisoners, Captain O'Brien shifted the cannon and swivels, with the ammunition and small arms, from the captured schooner over to his fleeter sloop, and set forth in search of more prizes and glory. Straightway the efforts of the British naval authorities to punish him for his assault on the *Margaretta* gave him the opportunity to acquire both. Two schooners, the *Diligence* and the *Tapanagouche*, were sent from Halifax to bring the obstreperous Irish-Yankee in for trial. But Captain O'Brien was a sailorman as well as a haymaker. By skilfully handling his sloop he separated the cruisers,

Digitized by Google

and then captured them one at a time by the bold dash that had succeeded in the assault on the *Margaretta.* This done, Captain O'Brien, with his prizes, sailed into Watertown, Massachusetts, where the provincial legislature was sitting, and delivered up everything to the colonial authorities.

Such brave deeds as these did not go unrewarded in those days. Captain O'Brien received a commission from the colony, and, with the three vessels well refitted, he was sent once more to sea to cruise for vessels bringing supplies to the British troops.

As said, not only was this an interesting fight, but it was one with far-reaching consequences. The deeds of Captain O'Brien, followed by others of a like nature performed by men who were stirred by his example, so exasperated Admiral Graves, the British commander-in-chief on the coast, that he sent a squadron of four vessels under Captain Mowat to take revenge in such a manner as would fill, as he supposed, the hearts of the people of the whole coast with terror. Portland (then called Falmouth), Maine, was the port selected for destruction.

The British account of what was done after Captain Mowat's fleet arrived before the town, shall be given for a reason that will appear further on in this history. The "Annual Regis-

Digitized by Google

ter" for 1776 (Dodsley's, London), in its "Retrospective view of American affairs in the year 1775," says (page 34):

"About 9 o'clock in the morning, a canonade was begun, and continued with little intermission through the day. About 3,000 shots besides bombs and carcases, were thrown into the town, and the sailors landed to compleat the destruction, but were repulsed with the loss of a few men. The principal part of the town, (which lay next the water) consisting of about 130 dwelling houses, 278 stores and warehouses, with a large new church, a new handsome court house, with the public library, were reduced to ashes; about 100 of the worst houses being favored by the situation and distance, escaped destruction, though not without damage."

In Allen's "Battles of the British Navy," the "new edition revised and enlarged" and published by George Bell & Sons, London, in 1893 (note that it was published in 1893), we get a modern British view of this important assault. On page 227 it says:

"Lieutenant Mowat's instructions were tempered with moderation. He was directed to confine his operations to certain enumerated towns which had rendered themselves conspicuous by open acts of hostility."

The town was destroyed on the 16th day of

Digitized by Google

October, and in Maine. Under instructions that, to an Englishman's mind, tempered with moderation, "a thousand unoffending, men women and children were thus turned out of doors" just as the fierce Maine winter was coming down upon them.

It should be told here that among the children who were thus obliged to seek shelter in brush and bark huts was a lad of fourteen years, named Edward Preble, of whom something will be told further on.

Meantime the Congress of the thirteen United Colonies had been in session at Philadelphia, resolving itself into a committee of the whole, from day to day, to consider "the state of trade in the colonies." Patriots by the thousand had answered the cries of distress at Lexington by gathering with their muskets about Boston. The battle of Bunker Hill, the most glorious defeat recorded in the annals of American warfare, had been fought and lost, because the supplies of gunpowder, brought by the colonists in the old-fashioned cowhorns, had failed them. Of missiles there was apparently no lack—they would have used pebbles from the beach had no others been available and powder abundant. But the want of gunpowder became chronic, and in considering the state of trade in the colonies the Congress found that of all branches of that trade the one needing

Digitized by Google

their most careful attention was the trade in gunpowder. It was a trade that did not thrive under the circumstances; but there was one source of supply that did not escape the attention of such able-minded as well as able-bodied citizens as Capt. Jeremiah O'Brien and his ilk afloat. That source was in the supply ships that provided for the British forces, and in the smaller cruisers that waited on the great ships of the British fleet. The sailormen of the coast pointed to the supplies afloat, and the legislators adopted the views of the sailormen. Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut provided small cruisers on their own account and sent them out seeking the enemy's supply ships, which, because the rebellious colonies had theretofore no sort of a navy, came to Boston and other ports in the king's possession, unarmed and without convoy. The far-sighted Washington, who had been placed in command of the heterogeneous forces about Boston, took hold of this matter and brought it to the attention of the Congress. In the mind of Washington it was an expedient well worth trying, but apparently he regarded it only as a temporary expedient. For during the summer and early fall of 1775, when the need of gunpowder became and remained most urgent, the colonies were fighting only for their rights as British subjects, as the reader re-

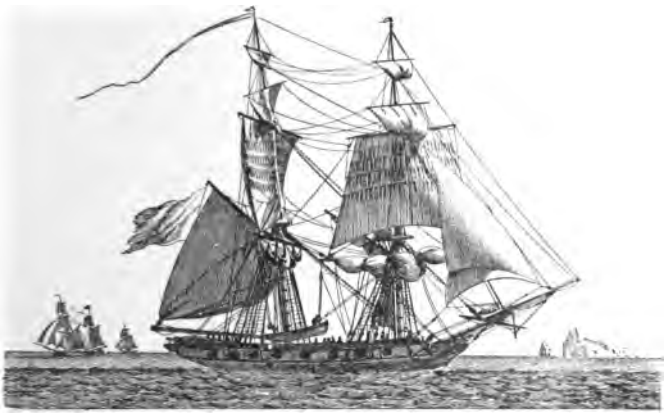
Digitized by Google

members, and not for national independence. A few long-headed leaders undoubtedly saw the drift of current events, but with every address to the throne there was sent a protestation of loyalty.

The earliest reference to this temporary expedient for getting gunpowder which is found in the printed reports of the doings of the Congress is in the minutes for Thursday, October 5, 1775. It was then resolved to inform General Washington that the Congress had "received certain intelligence of the sailing of two north country built brigs, of no force, from England on the 11th of August last, loaded with arms, powder and other stores for Quebec without convoy, which it being of importance to intercept," Washington was requested to "apply to the Council of Massachusetts-Bay for the two armed vessels in their service," and send them "at the expense of the continent" after the brigs. Moreover, he was informed that "the Rhode Island and Connecticut vessels of force will be sent directly to their assistance." Further still, it was resolved that "the general be directed to employ the said vessels and others, if he judge necessary." That was a very important set of resolutions in connection with the history of the navy. And the same may be said of the resolutions of Friday, October 13th, when it

Digitized by Google

was provided that "a swift vessel to carry ten carriage guns and a proportionable number of swivels, with eighty men, be fitted out with all possible despatch for a cruise of three months," and, further, "that another vessel be fitted out for the same purposes." Deane, Langdon,



A Brig of War Lowering a Boat.

From a picture drawn and engraved by Baugean.

and Gadsden were chosen as a committee of the Congress to look after the fitting out of the vessels. Further than that, on Monday, October 30, 1775, it was resolved that the second vessel previously ordered should "carry fourteen guns and a proportionate number of swivels and men," while two other ships, "one to carry not exceeding twenty guns and the other not exceeding thirty-six guns," were to

Digitized by Google

be chartered for the same purpose—to cruise "eastward" to intercept the British store-ships.

How under the resolutions of October 5th Captain Manly of the schooner *Lee* was sent "eastward"; how he captured a large brigantine loaded with munitions of war; how, in consequence of this capture, "a long, lumbering train of wagons, laden with ordnance and military stores, and decorated with flags, came wheeling into camp"—Washington's camp—the next day after a host of Connecticut troops had deserted the cause, and "it was feared their example would be contagious"; how "such universal joy ran through the whole camp as if each one grasped victory in his own hands,"—all are parts of a story that may not be wholly omitted here; but the resolutions of the Congress did not provide, properly speaking, for an American navy. They only provided temporary means for obtaining supplies. The Congress was not yet ready to take the important step of establishing a navy as a branch of the public service.

But the thought of a colonial navy was abroad—it was even then officially before the Congress, although it had not been acted upon. Officially, the subject of establishing a colonial navy came from Rhode Island, where Capt. Abraham Whipple and his paving-

Digitized by Google

stones had conquered the schooner *Gaspé*. On August 26, 1775, the two houses of the Rhode Island legislature concurred in ordering their representatives in the Congress to propose the establishment of a navy "at the expense of the continent." So cautious were the members of the Congress in handling the matter that, when, on October 3d, one of the Rhode Island delegates—presumably Samuel Ward, who was their leader—called the attention of the Congress to the proposal of his legislature, they did not even mention the matter definitely in the minutes of the day. The minutes read: "One of the delegates for Rhode Island laid before the Congress a part of the instructions given them," etc. "The proposal met great opposition," and even the briefest consideration of the matter had to go over to a later day. "In the Congress at Philadelphia, so long as there remained the dimmest hope of favor to its petition, the lukewarm patriots had the advantage."

But a time was coming when they were to change their feelings in this matter radically and in a day. They had ordered the forces afloat and ashore "carefully to refrain from acts of violence which could be construed as open rebellion," but before the end of the year they had taken such a long step toward the

Digitized by Google

Declaration of Independence that to turn back was impossible.

It was on October 31st that the change of sentiment was wrought. One cannot help wishing that what a newspaper man in these days would call "a crackerjack reporter" might have been present to describe the stir in the Congress when, on that day, one messenger arrived to announce that the British king had succeeded in hiring 20,000 of "the finest troops in Europe"—Germans—to fight against the colonists, while a second messenger followed with the story of the desperate plight of the people of Falmouth, who had been driven from their homes to face a Maine winter by the assault of the infamous Mowat. But if we lack the picture we have the record of what was done in consequence of the news then received.

Though stirred as never before since they had come together, the members of the Congress moved with judicial moderation, and it was not until Saturday, November 25th, that they resolved to make an aggressive fight at sea. On this day they adopted a preamble that eloquently told how "orders have been issued . . . under colour of which said orders the commanders of his majesty's said ships have already burned and destroyed the flourishing and populous town of Falmouth,

Digitized by Google

and have fired upon and much injured several other towns within the United Colonies, and dispersed at a late season of the year, hundreds of women and children, with a savage hope that those may perish under the approaching rigours of the season who may chance to escape destruction from fire and sword." And then they resolved that all armed British vessels, and all "transport vessels in the same service," "to whomsoever belonging," with their cargoes, that might fall into the hands of the colonists, "shall be confiscated." Further than that, commissions not only for the captains of the colonial cruisers, but for the commanders of privateers as well, were ordered to be issued under proper regulations. The colonies were recommended to "erect courts of justice" to dispose of the prizes to be so captured, and a scheme for distributing prize money to the crews of both cruisers and privateers was approved.

The Admiralty Seal.

Three days later—on November 28, 1775—the minutes contain the first adopted "Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies," and that

Digitized by Google

was the first occasion on which the term navy of the United Colonies appears in the minutes of the proceedings.

Very curious and well worth the study of any one interested in history are those first rules adopted for the American navy—a navy not yet actually in existence. But for the present purpose it is necessary to note only the thoughtfulness of the Congress for the comfort of the members of the crews—especially the comfort of the men before the mast. A remarkably large space in the printed report of these regulations relates to the feeding of the men, and if to this space be added that devoted to the regulations for the care of the sick and wounded, together with what was ordered for the preservation of the property rights of the sailors, then more than one-half of all that was decided upon was in the interest of the men in the forecastle. The bearing of this policy on the future of the American navy will appear further on, but it may be said here that it was not for nothing that grave legislators were concerned to provide that "a proportion of canvas for pudding-bags, after the rate of one ell for every sixteen men," should be served out at proper intervals.

Thereafter the making of a navy went on more rapidly. Within a week word came that Lord Dunmore, with a fleet in the Chesapeake

Digitized by Google

Bay, was aiding the Tories there to engage in trade with the West Indies, contrary to the colonial regulations, and, worse yet, was stirring up a race war. In consequence of this the Congress resolved, on December 5th, that all the vessels engaged in the trade established by Dunmore, with their cargoes, should be seized when possible and held "until the further order of this Congress." And that is a matter of importance, because it was the first warrant of the Congress permitting the capture of merchant ships of the enemy when engaged in another traffic than the carrying of supplies to the enemy's military or naval stations.

Next (on December 11th) the Congress ordered that "a committee be appointed to devise ways and means for furnishing these colonies with a naval armament." The alacrity with which that committee acted was something phenomenal, for in two days they brought in their report, "which being read and debated," was adopted. They had determined to build "five ships of 32 guns, five of 28 guns, three of 24 guns, making in the whole thirteen." These were to be constructed, one in New Hampshire, two in Massachusetts, one in Connecticut, two in Rhode Island, two in New York, four in Pennsylvania, and one in Maryland. They were expected to go afloat

Digitized by Google

"by the last of March next," and the cost was not to be "more than 66,666⅔ dollars each, on an average, allowing two complete suits of sails for each ship." So far as the committee could see, there would be but one difficulty in the way of sending all these ships to sea well found for the service, and that was in the lack of canvas and gunpowder. They would need 7,500 pieces of canvas for the sails and 100 tons of powder for the magazines, and there was not any of either in the market.

In the meantime the marine committee appointed under the resolution of October 13th to fit out two vessels to "cruise eastward" after the king's transports, had been increased in number, and in December consisted of Silas Deane, Christopher Gadsden, John Langdon, Stephen Hopkins, Joseph Hewes, and Richard Henry Lee. John Adams, who was an enthusiastic supporter of the project to create a navy from the moment it was discussed, had been at first a member of this committee, but because of other duties he left it, and Gadsden took the place. The names of these men are well worth remembering, for they were the originators of the American navy. While the Congress was preparing to build the navy these men had labored faithfully, and with success, to provide one ready made out of the ships that could be purchased along the coast.

Digitized by Google

Christopher Gadsden. John Langdon. Richard Henry Lee.

Stephen Hopkins. Joseph Hewes. Silas Dean.

The Founders of the American Navy.

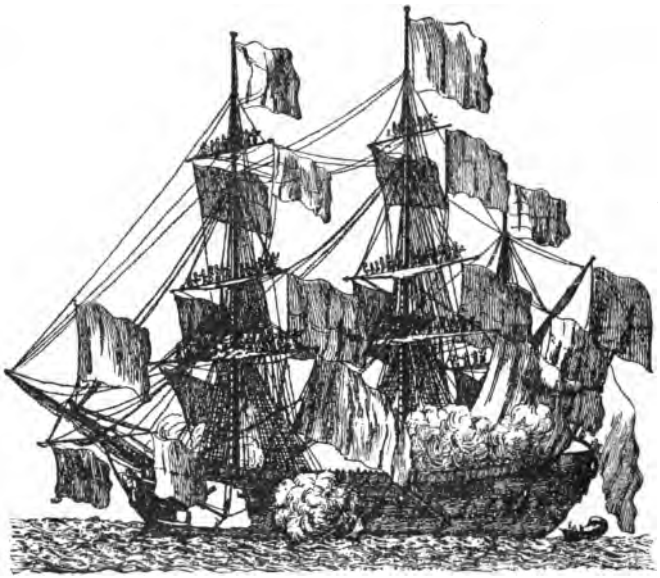
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

The Congress had, on November 2d, placed $100,000 at their disposal. With this they went about buying ships and supplies for them. A London packet called the *Black Prince* came into port under command of that Captain John Barry who, later on, was a captain in the American navy. She was of good scantling, and was considered a vessel worthy of becoming the flagship of the new fleet. The committee purchased her, and, after renaming her the *Alfred*, after Alfred the Great, they mounted twenty nine-pounders on deck, with four (it is said) smaller guns—presumably four-pounders—on the forecastle and poop. Another merchant ship, called the *Sally*, was purchased and renamed *Columbus*, for the great explorer, after which she received eighteen or twenty (authorities vary) nine-pounders. She is said to have been crank (top-heavy) and of small value. Two brigs were purchased and renamed the *Andrea Doria*, for the famous Genoese sailor, and the *Cabot*, for the early explorer of North America. These are set down as carrying fourteen four-pounders each. A third brig was purchased in Providence and named for that town, because, according to John Adams, that town was "the residence of Governor Hopkins and his brother Esek, whom we appointed the first Captain." She carried twelve guns—sixes or fours. In addi-

Digitized by Google

tion to these, the committee obtained a sloop of ten guns, called the *Hornet*, and an eight-gun schooner named the *Wasp*. These were purchased and equipped in Baltimore, and then brought around to Philadelphia. The



Vessel of War Saluting, with the Yards Manned.

From an old French engraving.

Fly, an eight-gun schooner, completed the list.

While the committee were gathering this fleet at Philadelphia, the Congress showed its appreciation of the work in hand by voting that the crews should be engaged to serve

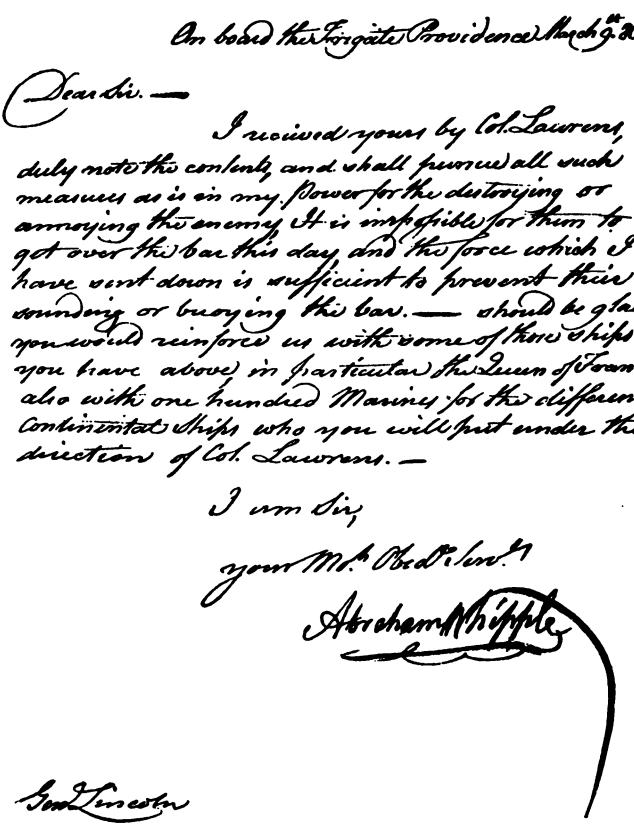
Digitized by Google

until January 1, 1777—practically for one year. They further voted $500,000 of the continental currency to the use of the naval committee.

Then, on Tuesday, December 19th, the Congress still further showed their appreciation of the situation of affairs by resolving "that the Committee of Safety of Pennsylvania be requested to supply the armed vessels, which are nearly ready to sail, with four tons of gunpowder at the continental expense"; and, further, "that the said committee be requested to procure and lend the said vessels as many stands of small arms as they can spare, not exceeding 400."

The Pennsylvania people had already agreed to furnish these necessaries; the resolutions of the Congress were only in the nature of vouchers, and, twenty-four hours later, the first American fleet was found and fitted for service. Only the crews for the ships were needed, and these the committee had provided ready for the occasion, so all that was then required to man the ships was for the Congress to confirm the appointment of the officers. And this was done on the memorable date, Friday, December 22, 1775. The resolutions of the Congress shall be given in full, because it was upon this legal warrant that the American navy was founded. They were as follows:

Digitized by Google



On board the Frigate Providence March 9th 80.

Dear Sir. —

I received yours by Col. Laurens, duly note the contents, and shall pursue all such measures as is in my power for the distroying or annoying the enemy. It is impossible for them to get over the bar this day and the force which I have sent down is sufficient to prevent their sounding or buoying the bar. — should be glad you would reinforce us with some of those ships you have above in particular the Queen of France, also with one hundred Marines for the different Continental Ships who you will post under the direction of Col. Laurens. —

I am Sir,

your Mo.t Ob.d Serv.t

Abraham Whipple

Gen.l Lincoln

Facsimile of a Letter from Abraham Whipple to General Lincoln during the Siege of Charleston.

From the original at the Lenox Library.

"The committee appointed to fit out armed vessels, laid before congress a list of the officers by them appointed agreeable to the powers to them given by Congress, viz:

Esek Hopkins, esq. comander in chief of the fleet—

Digitized by Google

Dudley Saltonstall, Captain of the *Alfred.*

Abraham Whipple, Captain of the *Columbus.*

Nicholas Biddle, Captain of the *Andrea Doria.*

John Burrow Hopkins, Captain of the *Cabot.*

First lieutenants, John Paul Jones, Rhodes Arnold, ——— Stansbury, Hoysted Hacker, Jonathan Pitcher.

Second Lieutenants, Benjamin Seabury, Joseph Olney, Elisha Warner, Thomas Weaver, ——— McDougall.

Third Lieutenants, John Fanning, Ezekiel Burroughs, Daniel Vaughn.

Resolved, That the Pay of the Comander in-chief of the fleet be 125 dollars per calender month.

Resolved, That commissions be granted to the above officers agreeable to their rank in the above appointment.

Resolved, That the committee for fitting out armed vessels, issue warrants to all officers employed in the fleet under the rank of third lieutenants.

Resolved, That the said committee be directed (as a secret committee) to give such instructions to the commander of the fleet, touching the operations of the ships under his command, as shall appear to the said committee most conducive to the defence of the United Colonies, and to the distress of the enemy's naval forces and vessels bringing supplys to their fleets and armies, and lay such instructions before the Congress when called for."

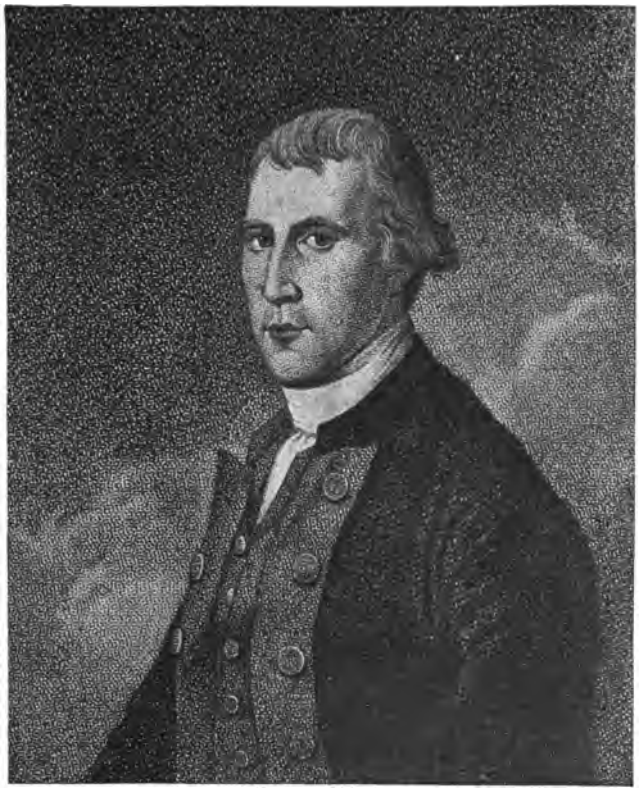
Digitized by Google

The thirteen United Colonies had at last a naval fleet, armed, equipped, and manned, and legally authorized to sail away on the secret expedition the committee had planned. But before Commodore Hopkins might up anchor and spread his canvas to the breeze there was one ceremony to be performed which, though not mentioned in any colonial law, was (and it still is) considered of the utmost importance. He must "put his ships in commission"—must "pipe all hands on deck," and then "hoist in their appropriate places the national colors and the pennant of the commanding officer," after which he must address the crew and "read to them the order by virtue of which he assumes command."

That is a most impressive ceremony, and it was now to be performed for the first time in the American naval fleet.

Important—even thrilling as was the occasion, there is no known record by which the date on which this ceremony was performed may be definitely located. But it is unquestioned that the naval committee of the Congress had, on this December 22d, secured the crews as well as the ships for a fleet, and that the crews were then on board awaiting the coming of properly authorized officers. There is, therefore, no reason to doubt that as soon as the Congress had passed the resolutions

Digitized by Google



Captain Nicholas Biddle.

From an engraving by Edwin.

above quoted, and the commissions therein mentioned had been signed, the commodore and his officers immediately went on board to take formal possession.

But whatever the date, it is recorded that it was on a beautiful winter day when the com-

Digitized by Google

modore and his officers made their way to the foot of Walnut Street, Philadelphia, where a ship's long-boat awaited them. A great throng of patriots gathered along shore on the arrival of the officers, and the shipping along the whole river front was not only decorated with bunting, but decks and rails and rigging were occupied by enthusiastic spectators.

Pushing off and rowing away through the floating ice, Commodore Hopkins reached the ladder at the side of the *Alfred*, and, followed by all his officers, mounted to the deck. The shrill whistle of the boatswain called the crew well aft in the waist of the ship. The officers gathered in a group on the quarter-deck. A quartermaster made fast to the mizzen signal halliards a great yellow silk flag bearing the picture of a pine tree with a coiled rattlesnake at its roots, and the impressive motto "Don't Tread on Me." This accomplished, he turned toward the master of the ship, Capt. Dudley Saltonstall, and saluted.

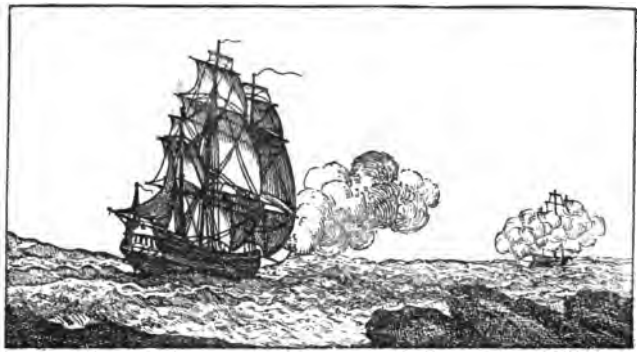
And then, at a gesture from the captain, the executive officer of the ship, the immortal John Paul Jones, eagerly grasped the flag halliards, and while officers and seamen uncovered their heads, and the spectators cheered and cannon roared, he spread to the breeze the first American naval ensign.

The grand union flag of the colonies, a flag

Digitized by Google

of thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, with the British jack in the field, and the pennant of the commander-in-chief, were then set, and the resolutions of the Congress read. The first American naval fleet was in commission.

Digitized by Google



A Frigate Chasing a Small Boat.

From an old French engraving.

CHAPTER II

FIRST CRUISE OF THE YANKEE SQUADRON

A FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL RAID ON NEW PROVIDENCE, BUT THEY LET A BRITISH SLOOP-OF-WAR ESCAPE—CHARACTER OF THE FIRST NAVAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AND OF THE MATERIAL WITH WHICH HE HAD TO WORK—ESEK HOPKINS, A LANDSMAN, SET TO DO A SAILOR'S WORK—CREWS UNTRAINED AND DEVOID OF "ESPRIT DE CORPS"—GOOD COURAGE, BUT A WOEFUL LACK OF OTHER NEEDED QUALITIES—HOPKINS DISMISSED FOR DISOBEDIENCE OF ORDERS.

THE career of Commodore Esek Hopkins as commander-in-chief of the American navy lasted for a year and ten days. If it was not a glorious career it was at least an instructive one, and the candid student is likely to conclude that, under the circumstances, it was creditable to his reputation. He was badly handicapped from the beginning in a variety

Digitized by Google

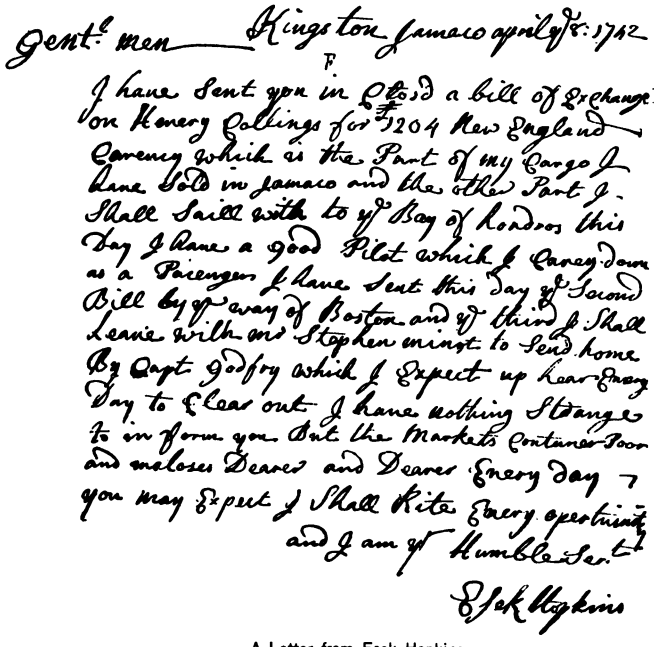
of ways, but in spite of this he accomplished something.

As already noted, Commodore Hopkins received his appointment chiefly through the influence of John Adams, and because he was the brother of the capable Governor of Rhode Island. The student of American history should keep in mind that the colonists were still monarchists in 1775, and that they followed the monarchial system of appointing favorites to office. That is to say, the man who had the most influence, who had what politicians call a "pull," got the appointment, regardless, usually, of his fitness for the place. Commodore Hopkins had been a brigadier-general in the Rhode Island militia by appointment of his brother. He had served in various capacities at sea, but it is likely that training had made him a soldier rather than a sailor, and no greater mistake can be made by executive authority than to appoint a soldier to do a sailorman's work.

Further than this, the vessels under the command of Hopkins were all built for carrying cargoes and not for fighting—they were not as swift or as handy as fighting ships of the same size. Worse yet, they were manned by crews brought together for the first time—men who were not only unacquainted with each other, and therefore devoid of *esprit de*

Digitized by Google

corps, but who were unaccustomed, for the most part, to the discipline necessary on a man-of-war and untrained in the use of great guns. When compared with the crews of the


Gent.l men Kingston Jamaco april 8: 1742

F

I have Sent you in Closd a bill of Exchange on Henery Collings for £1204 New England Carency which is the Part of my Cargo I have Sold in Jamaco and the other Part I Shall Saill with to ye Bay of Londros this Day I have a good Pilot which I Carey down as a Pacenger I have Sent this day ye Second Bill by ye way of Boston and ye third I Shall Leave with mr Stephen minot to Send home By Capt Godfry which I Expect up hear Every Day to Clear out I have nothing Strange to inform you But the Markets Continues Poor and maloses Dearer and Dearer Every day you may Expect I Shall Rite Every opertuinity and I am ye Humble Ser.t

Esek Hopkins

A Letter from Esek Hopkins.

From the original at the Lenox Library.

British warships they were more inferior in these two respects than were the raw militia around Boston when compared with the British regulars. The raw militia could at least shoot well.

With these facts in mind it is worth while

Digitized by Google

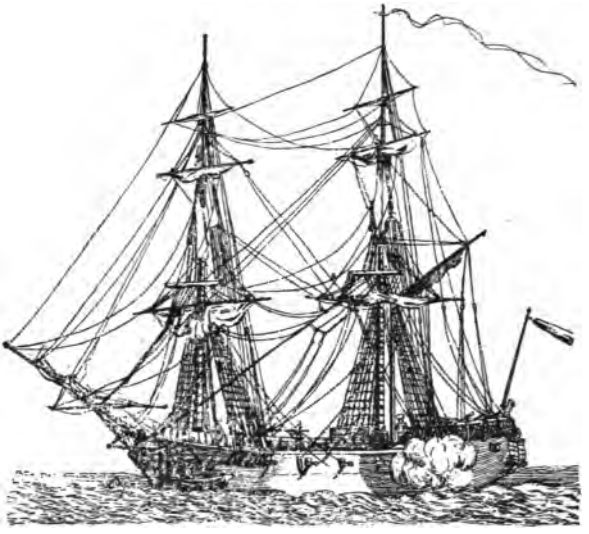
comparing the American ships with the British naval forces on the coast. As said, Commodore Hopkins had eight vessels, of which two only were ships, and the others were brigs or smaller, and all were lubberly merchantmen. All told, this squadron mounted just 114 guns, of which the largest was a cannon that could throw a round cast-iron ball weighing nine pounds. Even of these there were less than fifty. And the powder to load them and the muskets with which the seamen had been armed were all borrowed from the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Yet this puny squadron, "poor and contemptible, being for the greater part no better than whale boats," as a British authority truly says, was to go to sea to make war—against what force does the reader suppose? A navy of 112 ships, carrying 3,714 guns, of which force no less than seventy-eight ships, carrying 2,078 guns, were either already on the American coast or under orders to go there.

Nor does a comparison of the number of guns—114 against 2,078—give an idea of the utter inefficiency of the American sea power; for, while the best of the American guns was but a nine-pounder, at least a fourth of the guns on the British ships—at least 500 of them—were eighteen-pounders or heavier. For every nine-pounder in the American ships there were

Digitized by Google

at least ten of double that size in the British, not to mention the 1,500 and more guns in the fleet that included six-pounders, nine-pounders, and twelve-pounders. "Poor and contemptible" were just the words for describing the



A Corvette.

From an old French engraving.

comparative merits of the American warships. And in the matter of experience and training the American crews were but little better than their ships and guns. As will appear further on, there were to be fights between British ships manned by experienced, thoroughly disciplined crews of full numbers against Yankee

Digitized by Google

ships that were manned for the greater part by *seasick landsmen*, and short-handed at that.

The secret orders that had been given to Commodore Hopkins commanded him to go in search of Lord Dunmore, who had been making so much trouble along the shores of Chesapeake Bay as to cause Washington to write that "if this man is not crushed before spring he will become the most formidable enemy America has." The ships were to gather at Cape Henlopen, and sail thence for the Chesapeake. But the Delaware River was full of ice, and it was not until February 17, 1776, that the squadron finally passed out to sea. Then, on the night of the 19th, while running along with a fresh breeze, the *Hornet* and the *Fly* became separated from the others, and did not again join the squadron.

It appears from the meagre record that Hopkins did not enter the Chesapeake at all. Instead of that he sailed away to the Bahama Islands, because he had learned that a large quantity of military supplies were stored at New Providence, with only a few men to guard them. He was determined to capture the supplies.

On reaching Abaco, Hopkins divided his forces by sending 300 men under Capt. Samuel Nichols, in ten small sloops found at Abaco, to capture New Providence. Hopkins

Digitized by Google

supposed the force would surprise the garrison, but the commander was found ready to repel an attack, and the *Providence* and the *Wasp* had to be sent over to assist the men in landing.

It was at this point that a branch of the American naval personnel, of which too little notice has been taken by historians, first made a record for gallantry. Captain Nichols was the first captain of marines in the American naval service, the organization of the marine corps having been ordered by the Congress on November 10, 1775.

Under cover of the guns of the *Providence* and the *Wasp*, Captain Nichols and his marines landed on the beach, and then "behaved with a spirit and steadiness that have distinguished the corps from that hour down to the present moment." They carried the forts by assault. "A hundred cannon and a large quantity of stores fell into the hands of the Americans," but because the Governor had been apprised of the coming of the Americans, he succeeded in sending away in a small coaster 150 barrels of powder.

It is worth noting that Commodore Hopkins not only loaded his vessels with these stores, but that the stores made a heavy cargo for them, and they were deep in the water when they turned toward home. It should be

Digitized by Google

Commodore Esek Hopkins.

From a very rare English engraving.

Digitized by Google

further noted that the Governor of the island "and several of the more prominent inhabitants" were carried away for use as hostages to compel the British authorities to modify the harsh treatment American prisoners were receiving.

New Providence was taken in the middle of March, 1776. Elated by the success of his expedition, Commodore Hopkins set sail for the north on the 17th of that month. How much more elated he and his crews would have felt could they have known that at four o'clock on that morning the British were hurriedly, and in great confusion, leaving Boston through fear of an assault by the troops of Washington, may be easily imagined.

Two weeks later the American fleet had arrived off the east end of Long Island, where, on April 4th, the tender *Hawke*, of six guns, and the bomb-brig *Bolton*, of twelve guns, were captured. And then followed a conflict that well-nigh ruined the reputation of the first American fleet commander. It began soon after midnight on the morning of April 6th.

With a gentle breeze, the fleet, well scattered out—too well, in fact—was washing along over the smooth sea between Block Island and the Rhode Island shore. Only those who have floated and dreamed in the soft light

Digitized by Google

of a warm night on these waters can fully appreciate the influences of sea and air over a sailor on such an occasion, but it was, last of all, a night for thoughts of bloodshed. Suddenly a large strange ship appeared in the midst of the fleet. From the way the narrative reads one is forced to the conclusion that the lookouts were all at least half asleep. The stranger was heading for the flagship *Alfred*, but before she could close in, the crew of the little brig *Cabot*, Capt. John Burrows Hopkins, woke up, and, ranging alongside, they hailed her.

For a reply the stranger fired a broadside, and so began the first naval battle of the first American squadron.

The brave captain of the *Cabot* returned the fire, in spite of the great superiority of the stranger, and still bravely stood to his duty, even after a second broadside from the stranger had partly disabled his brig, killed a number of his crew, and wounded himself.

The *Alfred*, the flagship, soon came ranging up beside the stranger and opened fire, whereat the stranger turned his attention to her; and then came the *Providence*, Captain Hazard, who secured a position on the lee quarter (they were all close hauled) of the enemy, where she opened an effective fire.

By this time the *Cabot* was drifting out of

Digitized by Google

range, but the *Andrea Doria* came up to take her place. For an hour thereafter the stranger maintained the unequal contest, while the fleet drifted along over the smooth sea. At one time a shot from the stranger cut away the tiller ropes of the Yankee flagship, leaving her to broach to where she could not use her own guns. At that the stranger raked her fore and aft with a number of broadsides. But when repairs had been made the *Alfred* closed in once more, and then, at about two o'clock in the morning, the stranger found it too hot, and, putting up his helm, he squared away for Newport and safety.

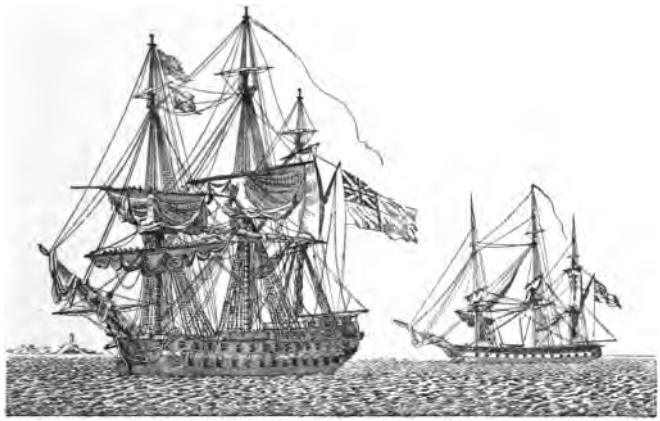
Commodore Hopkins pursued the stranger until after daylight. The course lay along the Rhode Island coast, and the people of the region, awakened by the roar of the guns, came hurrying to the cliffs to look away over the smooth water, where one ship, badly cut up aloft, was still able to keep ahead of the fleet that followed, and fired at frequent intervals upon the pursued.

But the ships of the American fleet were cargo-carriers deeply loaded with the spoils of New Providence, and the stranger was a man-o'-war well formed and fitted for the sea. So the chase ended when it was found that the stranger steadily gained, and the distance from Newport was growing so short as to warrant

Digitized by Google

the belief that the cannonading would call out the British fleet then lying there. So the Yankee fleet "hauled its wind," captured a small tender that had been in company with the stranger, and then made port at New London.

When there Commodore Hopkins learned



An English "Seventy-Four" and a Frigate Coming to Anchor.

From an old engraving.

that the stranger he had encountered was the British sloop-of-war *Glasgow*, Capt. Tyringham Howe, a full-rigged ship (three masts), carrying twenty guns, and a crew of 150, all told. She had lost one man killed and three wounded, while the American loss had been in all twenty-four killed and wounded, of whom the little brig *Cabot* lost four killed and seven wounded.

Digitized by Google

Nothing more is needed to show the superiority of the British naval crews over the American, at this time, than the above statement of casualties. How that superiority was overcome at the last will appear later on; but if all British warships in the contests that followed this one had been handled as Captain Howe handled the *Glasgow* the story of the American navy would not have appealed to patriotic American pride as it now does.

As for the effect of this fight upon the American people it should be said they were at first elated because it was told that the American fleet had driven off an enemy of superior strength. But when the real facts became known their elation was turned to anger that was really as little founded in reason as their joy had been. Commodore Hopkins and his men had shown unquestioned bravery. Considering their lack of knowledge and experience, they had done well enough. They had captured and brought into port military supplies that were badly needed and could be obtained only by capture from the enemy. Unfortunately, the Americans overlooked this, and thought only of the escape of the valiant *Glasgow*.

The career of the first American squadron, as a squadron, practically came to an end when it arrived at New London, although it did

Digitized by Google

afterwards sail thence as a squadron around to Narragansett Bay after the British left Newport. What remains to be told of the career of Commodore Hopkins will occupy brief space. In the month of June the Congress investigated his case. His good friend John Adams defended him successfully. It was decided that he had exceeded his orders in going east of Long Island, for he had been directed to "annoy the enemy's ships upon the coast of the Southern States," but he was merely relieved of his command temporarily. On October 16th his case was considered once more, and a vote of censure was carried. On October 19th he was directed to take "command of the fleet formerly put under his care," but he was very dilatory in getting ready for sea, and so he was once more summoned before Congress. This summons he refused to obey, and on January 2, 1777, he was dismissed from the service.

According to Lieut. F. S. Bassett, U. S. N., Hopkins, after the war of the Revolution, "resided near Providence, R. I., and was several times a member of the General Assembly for that State, and died there on February 26, 1802, aged eighty-four years. He was, when made commander-in-chief, fifty-seven years old, and, Bancroft says, old and incompetent. His portraits show him to be a

Digitized by Google

man of vigor, and he was influential in the political affairs of his own State. His bravery was never called into question, but he was doubtless not a good seaman, and was incompetent to command the navy."

His title of commander-in-chief was intended to rank him with Washington, the commander-in-chief of the army. The title was never again conferred on an American naval man.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

ALONG SHORE IN 1776

BRILLIANT DEEDS BY THE FIRST HEROES OF THE AMERICAN NAVY —WHY NICHOLAS BIDDLE ENTERED PORT WITH BUT FIVE OF THE ORIGINAL CREW OF THE *ANDREA DORIA*—RICHARD DALE ON THE SLEEK *LEXINGTON*—THE *RACEHORSE* CAPTURED IN AN EVEN FIGHT — CAPTAIN LAMBERT WICKES IN THE *REPRISAL* BEATS OFF A LARGER VESSEL — JOHN PAUL JONES IN HIS EARLIER COMMANDS—A SMART RACE WITH THE FRIGATE *SOLEBAY* — SIXTEEN PRIZES IN FORTY-SEVEN DAYS IN CAPE BRETON REGION—POKING FUN AT THE FRIGATE *MILFORD*— THE VALUABLE *MELLISH*—AN ABLE FIGHTER WHO LACKED POLITICAL INFLUENCE.

A MORE cheerful story of the feats of Yankee sailormen is found on turning to the record made by individual vessels during the period when Commodore Hopkins was at the head of the navy list. For instance, there was the brig *Lexington* (of significant name), under the command of Capt. John Barry, who had brought the *Alfred*, when she was the merchant ship *Black Prince*, into Philadelphia and sold her to the Congress. While Commodore Hopkins was in New London explaining how the British ship *Glasgow* had escaped, Captain

Digitized by Google

Barry was cruising off the Virginia capes; and on April 17, 1776, fell in with a tender called the *Edward*, armed with six or eight guns and carrying a crew of thirty-five men under command of Lieutenant Boucher. The lack of skill of the Americans at this time and the bravery of the English are both conclusively shown by the fact that the *Edward* held out for an hour, although the *Lexington* carried sixteen guns and twice as many men as the tender.

May 10, 1776, should be a memorable one in the history of the navy, for on that day John Paul Jones first received an independent command. He was placed in charge of the *Providence* and sent to carry troops to New York. What he subsequently accomplished with his little twelve-gun brig will be told further on.

On May 16th the *Andrea Doria*, Capt. Nicholas Biddle, was ordered to sea. For four months she cruised between the capes of the Delaware and the coast of Maine, and during that time she captured ten prizes, all but one of which reached port safely. Two of these transports had 400 British troops on board. The British frigate *Cerebus* recaptured one of these transports, and the prisoners managed to retake the other, but they were again captured and taken in. When Captain Biddle

Digitized by Google

John Barry

From an engraving of the portrait by Chappel.

Digitized by Google

at last brought his little brig into port he had but five of his original crew on board. The others had all been sent away in prizes and their places supplied by volunteers from the vessels captured.

As will appear further on, Nicholas Biddle was one of the most heroic men known to the American naval register. He was one who knew his duty, and no odds of force against him deterred him in doing it.

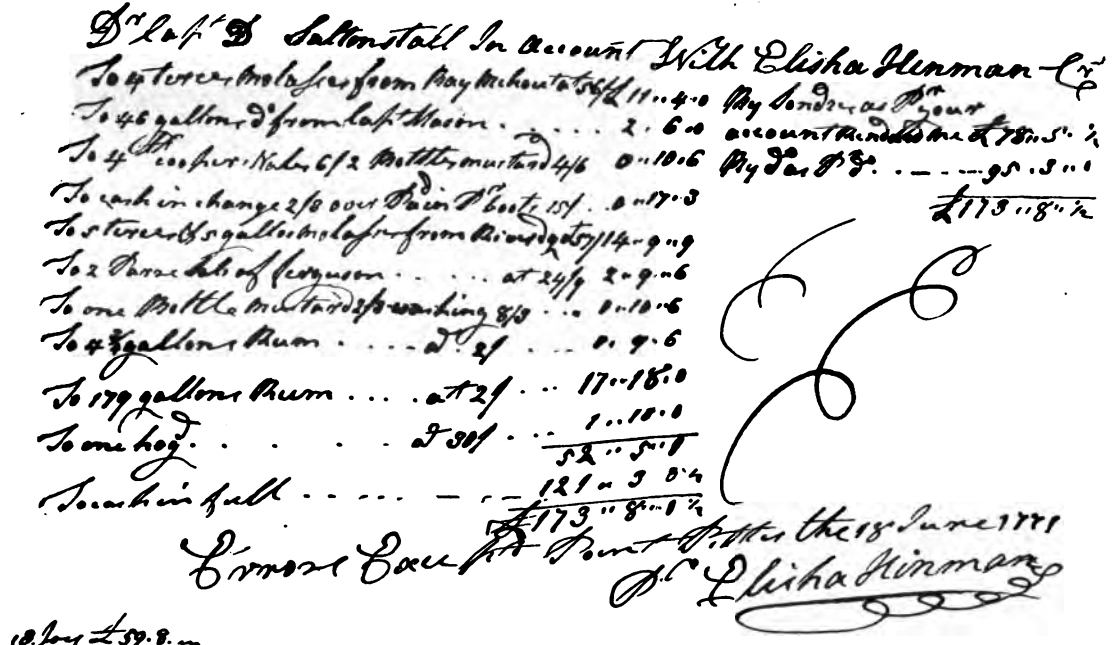
The next of the squadron to get to sea was the brig *Cabot*, of fourteen guns. She sailed under Capt. Elisha Hinman the latter part of May, and was gone until October 5th. She sent in seven prizes during this time.

Even the crank old *Columbus* made a successful cruise. Under the command of Capt. Abraham Whipple, whose paving-stones had captured the *Gaspé*, she took four prizes while at sea between May and August.

Meantime the schooner *Wasp*, under Capt. Charles Alexander, took the British bark *Betsey* on May 9th, while in October, under Lieutenant Baldwin, she captured three more prizes.

A notable event of the year was the adventure of the *Lexington* under Capt. William Hallock. She was returning from the West Indies loaded with powder and other military stores, when she was captured by the British

Digitized by Google



Facsimile of Account between Dudley Saltonstall and Elisha Hinman.

From the original at the Lenox Library.

Digitized by Google

frigate *Pearl*. There was such a high sea running at the time that the captain of the *Pearl* decided, after taking four or five men out of the *Lexington*, not to transfer the rest of her crew to his own ship. So he placed her in charge of a prize crew, with orders to follow the *Pearl*.

As night came on, the gale increased and the sea became more boisterous. The prize officers, thinking no danger was to be apprehended from the prisoners under such circumstances, slacked up in their vigilance, and eventually both the prize captain and the officer of the deck went below for a comforting toddy. At that the watchful Yankees knocked the British sailor from the tiller and the guards to the deck, secured the companionway against the exit of the officers, and, putting up the helm, headed away for Baltimore, where they arrived safely.

A leading spirit in this recapture was Master's Mate Richard Dale, who afterwards, as the executive officer of the *Bonhomme Richard*, under John Paul Jones, won lasting honor.

Another stirring event of this year was the fight between the Yankee brig *Andrea Doria* and the British brig *Racehorse*. It was the more stirring for the reason that the *Racehorse* had been sent out expressly to capture

Digitized by Google

the Yankee, and it was a fair and even match, ship for ship.

The *Andrea Doria* was under command of Capt. Isaiah Robinson. Captain Robinson, in the sloop *Sachem*, had, on July 6th, two days after the colonies had declared their independence of Great Britain, captured a British vessel of six guns and brought her into port. For his success in this he was transferred to the brig *Andrea Doria*, and sent to the Dutch port of St. Eustatius to get arms and ammunition for the American army. It is worth mentioning, perhaps, that he received a salute from the governor of the port (the first salute the flag ever received from a foreign power), although the governor was afterward removed from office at the request of the British, for firing it. Having taken in his cargo, Captain Robinson steered for home, but off the western end of Porto Rico fell in with the *Racehorse*, and during the next two hours the sun-lit tropical seas were the scene of what was probably the first even sea contest of the Revolution. It ended in the surrender of the *Racehorse* after her captain, Lieutenant Jones, had been mortally wounded. The *Andrea Doria* lost four killed and eight wounded. The loss on the *Racehorse* was "considerably greater."

Captain Robinson brought both vessels

Digitized by Google

safely into the Delaware, but there the career of the little *Andrea Doria* came to an end, for, before she could get to sea again, she had to be burned to prevent her falling into the hands of the enemy, who captured Philadelphia about that time.

Another West India fight was still more to

St. Pierre, Martinique.

From an old engraving.

the glory of the young American navy, even though the enemy was not captured. The American brig *Reprisal* sailed for Martinique early in the summer of 1776, and on the way captured and sent home a number of prizes. But when just outside of the port to which she was bound she fell in with the British sloop-of-war *Shark*, of sixteen guns. Not only was the *Shark* the larger vessel; the *Reprisal*, be-

Digitized by Google

cause of the number of prizes sent home, was short-handed. Nevertheless, when the *Shark* ranged up alongside of the Yankee and opened fire the Yankee fought back. The firing of the great guns brought the people of the port by hundreds to the heights overlooking the sea. And it was a spectacle well worth their coming, too, for the vigor of the Yankee defence compelled the *Shark* to haul off for repairs.

The *Reprisal*, during this cruise, was commanded by Capt. Lambert Wickes. As will appear further on, it was he who first flaunted the American flag in British waters and took British ships within sight of the British coasts.

The *Shark* afterward came into port and demanded of the authorities that the *Reprisal* be surrendered as a pirate. Of course the authorities (they were Frenchmen) refused.

How valuable all the prizes that have been mentioned were to the struggling colonists cannot be told here, but the reader will remember that at this time the American forces were wholly dependent on foreign sources for both powder and great guns. The Congress had, indeed, taken steps to manufacture muskets of "three-quarters of an inch bore, and of good substance at the breech, the barrel to be three feet eight inches long, the bayonet to

Digitized by Google

be 18 inches in the blade." But there was no factory for making these weapons, and the individual gunsmiths employed could do very little toward supplying an army. There was, in short, no sort of military supplies that was not lacking among the American forces and no sort that these captures of the Yankee naval vessels did not to a greater or less extent supply.

And what was of equal importance to the American success was the injury done to the enemy. During the year 1776 the Yankees captured 342 vessels, all told, "of which forty-two were recaptured, eighteen released, and five burned."

But the story of the fortunes of the navy during the first year of its existence is not yet completed. The early adventures of John Paul Jones are yet to be told.

It is to the credit of Commodore Hopkins that at the end of the cruise of his fleet he appreciated and admired the first lieutenant of the service. As already told, he ordered Lieutenant Jones to the command of the twelve-gun brig *Providence* on May 10, 1776. Having no blank commissions, Commodore Hopkins wrote the new commission on the back of the old one that Jones had received as a lieutenant from the Congress.

For a time the *Providence* was used for

Digitized by Google

carrying troops and convoying merchantmen along shore, and so successful was her new captain in eluding the vigilant cruisers of the enemy that he attracted the notice of Congress, and was promoted to the rank of captain, of which act he received notice on August 8, 1776.

With the notice that he had been promoted came orders to cruise for prizes "between Boston and the Delaware." Captain Jones was now fighting, not for the commercial privileges of oppressed colonists, but for a new nation struggling for recognition. There is no doubt that since July 4, 1776, he had performed his duty with a better heart than before that date, because there was greater honor in helping to establish a nation than in seeking justice for a colony, and with men of his class honor is all of life. In his eager search for the enemy after his promotion, Captain Jones stretched the territory that had been assigned to him so that he reached the neighborhood of the Bermudas.

Here on September 1, 1776, the lookout discovered a fleet of five ships well to windward. Jones believed that they were merchantmen, and began beating up to the largest of the fleet, but on getting closer she was found to be a frigate—the *Solebay*, of twenty-eight guns. At that Jones put his brig on the other tack,

Digitized by Google

and for nearly four hours kept beyond range, though the frigate steadily gained upon him, and was at the last within less than a hundred yards, and a little on the brig's lee quarter. The frigate had meantime been firing at intervals with her bow guns, though without effect.

But now the time had come when she could yaw around, and with a single broadside cut the little brig to pieces. Any man would have been justified in surrendering at once to save life, and only a man of extraordinary bravery and resources would have thought of doing otherwise. But Jones was the man for the occasion.

Fortunately, the weather was precisely to his liking—the sea was level, and yet there was a fresh breeze to fill the sails rap-full.

Easing his vessel away from the wind a little to give her more headway and bring her more directly under the bows of the frigate, where she would be in less danger of a broadside, Captain Jones, in a low voice, passed the word to stand by to square away before the wind and set studdingsails high and low on both sides. Very quickly, but without attracting attention, the crew led out the weather-braces and the spanker-brails, and placed the coils of the lee-braces ready for veering away. The studdingsails in stops were brought to the rails, and halliards and sheets made fast. This

Digitized by Google

John Paul Jones.

From an engraving by Longacre of the portrait by C. W. Peale.

Digitized by Google

done, a man with a lighted match was placed at each of the cannon on the lee side, while a quartermaster bent the grand union flag to the signal halliards.

The critical moment of the day was come, and with thrilling nerves the crew leaped to obey the orders that followed in swift succession. The helm was put hard up, and as the spanker was brailed in to the mast, the quartermaster hoisted the colonies' flag to the truck. The little brig turned like a yacht square down across the frigate's bows, and the men at the guns fired what was at once a salute to their flag and a raking blast to the frigate. And then, out of the white cloud of smoke rolling away over her rails, rose the filmy studding-sails to catch the helpful gale.

So sure had the crew of the *Solebay* been of their prize that the sudden dash and attack from the brig threw them into a confusion from which they did not recover until the *Providence* was beyond the reach of the grape-shot with which most of their guns were loaded. Moreover, the *Providence* now had the heels of it, and drew steadily away. The *Solebay* fired over 100 round shot, all told, but not one took effect.

Captain Jones now headed his brig off to the coast of Nova Scotia, where he hove to, one day, to give his men a change in diet by

Digitized by Google

catching codfish. While engaged in this very pleasant occupation the British frigate *Milford* came down on him, and the *Providence* again had to run. But Jones soon found that he could easily outsail the *Milford*, so to play with the enemy he shortened sail and allowed her to gain. Like a fat hound on the trail, she began to bark—to fire when a long way off, and with no more damage to the *Providence* than a dog's bark would have been.

"He excited my contempt so much by his continual firing at more than twice the proper distance that when he rounded to to give a broadside, I ordered my marine officer to return the salute with only a single musket," said Captain Jones in his report of the affair to the marine committee of the Congress.

The next day Captain Jones sailed into Canso Harbor. It should be kept in mind at this point that the Congress had, on March 23, 1776, resolved "that the inhabitants of these colonies be permitted to fit out armed vessels to cruise on the enemies of these United Colonies"—the restriction that made prizes of the enemy's men-of-war and transports only was entirely removed. The Congress had been driven to this step, of course, by the many outrages committed on the colonial coast by the British cruisers. Acting under this authority, and remembering these outrages,

Digitized by Google

Captain Jones found in Canso three English schooners. He burned one, sunk another, and loaded a third with the cargoes of the other two.

Next day he took small boats well armed and his flagship, and went after nine dismantled British vessels—ships, brigs, and schooners—lying at Madame Island, on the east side of the Bay of Canso. Finding the crews of these vessels on shore, Captain Jones promised to leave them enough of their fleet to take them home if they would help him fit the rest for sea. They agreed to this, and on September 26, 1776, Captain Jones got away with three large and deeply laden prizes. The ship *Adventure* he burned in the harbor.

After a cruise of forty-seven days, all told, he was again in Newport Harbor, having meantime captured sixteen prizes, besides destroying "many small vessels" and giving the people of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton a taste of the fear that had been felt on the Yankee coast. But he did not destroy the homes of those people as the homes of Portland, Maine, had been destroyed.

Meantime Captain Jones had learned, while on the Cape Breton coast, that a hundred American prisoners were kept at work as convicts in the coal mines there, and on reaching his home port he proposed an expedition to

Digitized by Google

liberate the prisoners and capture the coal fleet which was appointed to sail from Cape Breton to New York (then in the hands of the British). Commodore Hopkins, who was still at the head of the navy, approved the plan, and put Captain Jones in command of the flagship *Alfred*, and ordered the *Providence*, Capt. Hoysted Hacker, to go with him.

On November 2, 1776, these two vessels got under way, and on the night of the 3d passed safely through the British squadron off Block Island. The cruise was without incident until off the east coast of Cape Breton, where, on November 13th, they fell in with, and after a brisk action captured, two British vessels, of which one was the brig *Mellish*, of ten guns and carrying 150 men. On boarding her she was found to be loaded down with supplies for Sir Guy Carleton, who had, during the summer and early fall, been moving heaven and earth to build a fleet on Lake Champlain to sweep away the little American squadron there and so open the trail that led to Albany, the head of navigation on the Hudson. Sir Guy had already been driven back by the surpassing bravery and ability of Benedict Arnold, as will be told further on, and because of this defeat (it was practically a defeat) he was still more in need of the supplies than he would have been if successful in his plans.

Digitized by Google

Among other goods of the greatest value, the cargo of the *Mellish* included 10,000 complete uniforms.

On the same day a large fishing vessel was captured, from which sufficient provisions were taken to replenish the American stores, that were already growing scanty.

The next day, during a violent northwest gale, the *Providence* was separated from the flagship, and she sailed away for Newport; but Captain Jones held fast to his original purpose.

Entering Canso once more, he burned an English transport and a warehouse filled with oil and whalers' supplies. Continuing his voyage along the coast, he fell in with the coal fleet. It was under the protection of a British frigate, but the air was "dull," as the people of that coast say—it was a foggy day, and Captain Jones captured three of the largest of the fleet.

Two days later he fell in with a British privateer from Liverpool, out for a cruise after merchant ships belonging to the Americans. His hope of prize money was soon dispelled by the guns of Captain Jones, and his ship was added to the Yankee fleet. As she was pretty well armed, she was manned with Yankees under Lieutenant Saunders.

Finding now that the harbors adjacent to

Digitized by Google

the coal mines were blocked with ice; finding, moreover, that, with the addition of 150 prisoners to the number of men on board, he was short of both food and water, Captain Jones felt obliged to steer for home instead of trying to rescue the Americans in the coal mines.

The little fleet kept well together until off the Georges Bank, when, late in the afternoon, the British frigate *Milford*, that had chased the *Providence* in the last voyage, was discovered. Knowing the speed of the *Milford*, Captain Jones at once laid his plan for escape. His own ship, the *Alfred*, could outsail the frigate, but the prizes could not. The frigate was sure to overtake them, though not until after dark. So the captain of each of the prizes was instructed to hold fast on the course on which they were then sailing all night, regardless of any signals they might see from the flagship, and then, when day should come, to make the best course possible to port.

When this order was fully understood Captain Jones waited calmly for the early nightfall of the season. The *Milford* was steadily gaining, but the *Alfred*, with shortened sail, remained with the prizes as if to protect them. But when night was fully come the *Alfred*, with signals aloft for her prizes to follow, went off on the other tack, and the *Milford* promptly followed, while the prizes, except

Digitized by Google

the privateer under Lieutenant Saunders, kept on as before.

So, when daylight came, all of the prizes but the privateer were out of sight. The privateer was, therefore, retaken. During the afternoon a snowstorm came up. The *Milford* was still in chase of the *Alfred*, but the Yankee, "amid clouds and darkness and foaming surges, made her escape."

The *Alfred* arrived safely in Boston on December 15, 1776, but she had water and provisions for only two days left. When there her crew had the satisfaction of learning that all the other prizes had arrived in safety.

The importance of the *Mellish* as a prize was far greater, of course, than her mere money value, because of the uniforms she carried. These were at once forwarded to Washington's men at Trenton. So great, indeed, had been the value of this transport, that Captain Jones had determined to sink her if at any time he deemed her in great danger of recapture by the enemy, because her loss would "distress the enemy more than can be easily imagined." The service which John Paul Jones had rendered the colonies during the fall of 1776 was greater than that of any other man who had been afloat.

Nevertheless, on reaching port, instead of finding rewards and promotions awaiting him,

Digitized by Google

"he was mortified by degradation and injustice." Commodore Hopkins, though about to be dismissed from the service, was still commander-in-chief of the navy. Jealous of the growing fame of John Paul Jones, he placed Captain Hinman in command of the *Alfred* and ordered Jones back to the little brig *Providence*. Nor was that the worst of the trouble that Captain Jones had to face. The politicians in Congress had kept the distribution of rank in their own hands—they had, in fact, declared on April 17, 1776, that rank should not be regulated by the date of original appointments, but at the discretion of the Congress. So it was that the men in the navy who had influence in Congress could get promotion regardless of the quality of their services, while men without influence had to suffer. While John Paul Jones was on the high seas gathering supplies for the American army the Congress made out a new list of naval captains, and Jones, who had been the first of the lieutenants after a list of five captains, found himself the eighteenth in the new list of captains, although none of those ahead of him had rendered more distinguished services than he or showed greater ability as a commander, and but three or four at most had done as well. And John Paul Jones always wrote the word rank with a capital R.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

HE SAW "THE COUNTENANCE OF THE ENEMY"

THE STORY OF ARNOLD'S EXTRAORDINARY FIGHT AGAINST OVERWHELMING ODDS ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN—A THOUSAND SAILORS, OF WHOM SEVEN-TENTHS WERE PICKED MEN, ARMED WITH THE HEAVIEST GUNS, WERE PITTED UNDER A COURAGEOUS LEADER AGAINST 700 YANKEES, CHIEFLY HAYMAKERS, POORLY ARMED AND WITH INSUFFICIENT AMMUNITION—SAVAGES WITH SCALPING KNIVES AIDED THE BRITISH—A DESPERATE STRUGGLE AT THE END—THE BEST ALL-AROUND FIGHTER UNDER WASHINGTON.

IF the naval Lexington—the first battle of the Revolution afloat—was fought on the bar at Providence, Rhode Island, the naval Bunker Hill, a battle wherein glory and renown were gained in defeat, was fought on Lake Champlain. Not only was the moral effect of this battle quite as great in the courage it gave the Americans, and the pause for thought it gave the enemy; it served to head off a victorious invading British army bound for Albany and the subjugation of northern New York.

The American troops had invaded Canada, some under Benedict Arnold going through the Maine woods, and some under Montgomery going by way of Lake Champlain. The

Digitized by Google

Burlington Bay on Lake Champlain.

From an old engraving in the collection of Mr. W. C. Crane.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

two bodies had united under the walls of Quebec, and there Montgomery had died and Arnold had bled in vain. The terrors of the fierce Canadian winter and the distress of disease had aided the British forces in driving the Americans back, until at last, in the fall of 1776, Sir Guy Carleton, at the head of the British, was lodged at St. John's, at the north end of Lake Champlain, while Crown Point was the advance post of the Americans.

It will be remembered that at this time the waves of this beautiful lake lapped the unbroken wilderness, no matter what the direction of the wind might be. St. John's, Crown Point, and Ticonderoga were but military posts, and there was not even a woodsy road for wagons on either side of the lake north of Crown Point.

Sir Guy Carleton was confident in the belief that the revolted colonies would soon be subjugated, and he was full of ambition to have a part of the glory that would cover the British officers in their hour of triumph. His plan was to pass Lakes Champlain and George with the ample forces at his command, and then slash his way through the wilderness to Albany. Once there, the king's ships could come to meet him, the American territory would be cut in two at the Hudson, and then the end would come.

Digitized by Google

There was, indeed, when he arrived at the north end of Lake Champlain, but one reason why he did not press on in this victorious career. He could not pass over the lake for

Sir Guy Carleton.

From an engraving by A. H. Ritchie.

want of boats. The Americans, in their retreat, had carried off or destroyed every boat on the lake.

But Sir Guy Carleton was a man of energy as well as ambition. At his request three ships

Digitized by Google

were sent over from England in such shape that they might be taken to pieces on reaching the outlet of Lake Champlain. This done, the parts were transported over the wilderness road to St. John's, and there set up and launched in the lake. Meantime a British naval officer had been busy in superintending the building of a fleet of smaller vessels at St. John's—a fleet on which not only the sailors from the king's ships at Montreal worked, but the soldiers of the army; and even the farmers from the Canadian settlements were forced to turn to. Carleton himself was ever present to force on the work.

Fortunately, the task he had set was a long as well as a hard one. With all the men and means at his command, he could not get ready to sail until well on into the month of October. But when he was ready his was a fleet fit to terrify as well as astonish the farmers that, for the most part, composed the American forces, then under command of General Gates, at Ticonderoga and Crown Point. The *Inflexible*, that carried the flag of the fleet, was a ship of 300 tons, and carried eighteen twelve-pounders. There was one schooner called the *Maria*, with fourteen guns, and another, the *Carleton*, of twelve guns. There was a huge scow very appropriately call the *Thunderer*, for she was armed with six twenty-four-pounders and twelve six-pounders, besides several brass howitzers.

Digitized by Google

Drawn from Life at Philadelphia by Du Simitier.

Digitized by Google

There was a gondola of seven guns. There were twenty gunboats with one carriage gun each, the guns varying in size from nine to twenty-four-pounders. In all, the British flotilla included twenty-five vessels, that were armed with eighty-nine first-class guns of that day, and abundantly supplied with ammunition.

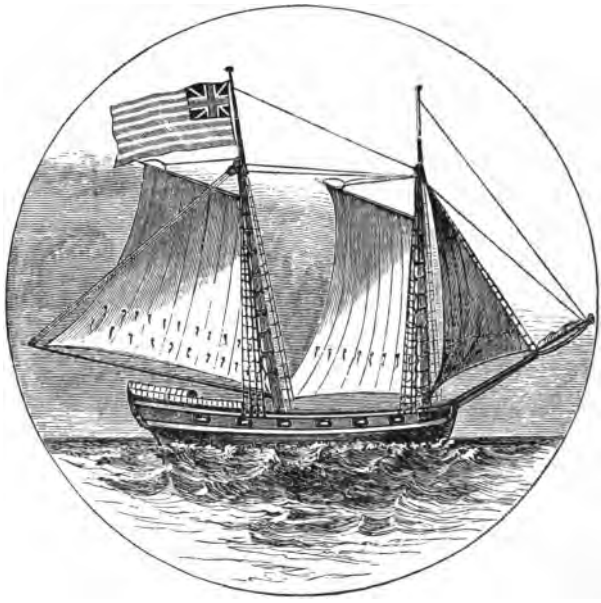
To Benedict Arnold was given the task of preparing a flotilla to stop the invasion of Sir Guy Carleton. Benedict Arnold was an army officer and in command, under Gates, of militia who were, as said, for the most part farmers. But Arnold was a man of infinite resource, energy, and courage. Some shipwrights and sailmakers were brought from the American coast, and with such materials as were at hand he set to work to build a navy for the defence of the lake. He had, fortunately, seen service at sea, and the task was not wholly beyond his experience.

When the month of October arrived Arnold was afloat with a fleet of fifteen vessels—the twelve-gun schooner *Royal Savage*, the ten-gun sloop *Enterprise*, the eight-gun schooner *Revenge*, the eight-gun galley *Trumbull*, the eight-gun galley *Congress*, the eight-gun galley *Washington*, the six-gun galley *Lee*, the five-gun gondola *Spitfire*, the five-gun gondola *Connecticut*, the three-gun gondola *New Haven*, the three-gun gondola *Providence*, the three-

Digitized by Google

gun gondola *Philadelphia*, the three-gun gondola *Jersey*, the three-gun gondola *New York*, and the three-gun gondola *Boston*.

Two or three of the names of the vessels built for the impending strife may be worth



The *Royal Savage*.

noting. The British named one of their medium-sized vessels the *Loyal Convert*. Arnold named the largest of his the *Royal Savage*. Carleton named another for himself, but Arnold, less vain, went to the leaders of the American army and to the towns of the nation for the names of his ships.

Digitized by Google

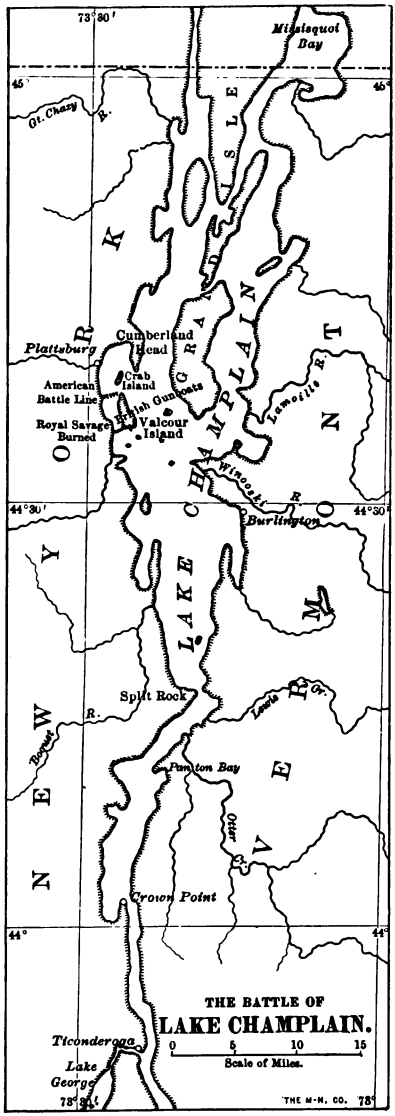
On the whole, the American fleet mounted eighty-eight guns to the eighty-nine of the British fleet, but they were inferior in weight of metal thrown, the largest being eighteen-pounders to the British twenty-four-pounders, while they needed 811 men for a full complement, but had only 700. And these were, from a man-o'-warman's point of view, "a miserable set; indeed, the men on board the fleet in general are not equal to half their number of good men." It was not that they lacked good will or bravery; it was that they were landsmen and untrained in the work before them.

On the other hand, Sir Guy Carleton's fleet was manned by a thousand men, among whom were "eight officers, nineteen petty officers and 670 picked seamen" from the British warships in the St. Lawrence, besides the soldiers of the expedition. The quotation is from Schomberg's "History of the British Navy." In addition to the regular crews, the British fleet was supported by a host of Iroquois Indians.

Just south of the present site of Plattsburg lies Valcour Island. The bay on the west side of which Plattsburg stands is enclosed by a long cape called Cumberland Head.

At daybreak on the morning of Wednesday, October 11, 1776, Benedict Arnold's little fleet

Digitized by Google



lay at anchor in a line across the north end of the strait between Valcour Island and the mainland. It was a clear, cold morning. A strong northerly wind was sweeping through this narrow valley between the Green Mountains and the ever-beautiful Adirondacks. It was just the kind of a day that Sir Guy Carleton wanted for his passage over the lake, and, soon after sunrise, his fleet came snoring along under full sail past Cumberland Head.

Digitized by Google

Because Arnold's little fleet lay well behind the forest on Valcour Island, Sir Guy and his fleet drove past without discovering that any one was there; but when they had opened out the view from the south between Valcour Island and the mainland, they saw that they were exposing their rear to the Americans. At this it was down helm and haul their tacks and get out oars on the smaller vessels, but the wind was so strong that it was not until after ten o'clock that the head of the fleet, which included the schooner *Carleton* and the gunboats, arrived within the channel where the American fleet lay.

The Action of October 11, 1776.

A. Plan of action. B. *Congress* galley and five gondolas.

In the meantime Arnold had taken the gondola *Congress* as his flagship—no doubt because she was furnished with oars, and, as a double-ender, could be easily handled—and with two other gondolas and the schooner *Royal Savage*, went down wind to meet the enemy. He reached them at eleven o'clock, and the battle opened

Digitized by Google

with a broadside from the British schooner *Carleton.*

In a brief time the whole of the British fleet of gunboats and gondolas got into line, and Arnold was obliged to beat back to the sup-

Fight on Lake Champlain, 1776.

A. American fleet. B. Gunboats. C. Schooner *Carleton.* D. Ship *Inflexible.* E. Anchorage of British fleet during the night. F. Radeau *Thunderer.* G. Gondola *Loyal Convert.* H. Schooner *Maria,* with Carleton on board.

port of the remainder of his vessels. In making this retreat the schooner *Royal Savage* was disabled by the shot of the enemy, and before repairs could be made she grounded hard and fast on Valcour Island. There she was fired, and then abandoned by her crew, who escaped to the woods on the island, where

Digitized by Google

some of them met a worse fate than death in the fleet, for Sir Guy Carleton had sent his Indians into the woods on both sides of the narrow water where the action was held, and these, of course, tortured as well as killed such prisoners as happened to fall into their hands.

Giving little, if any, heed to the abandoned American schooner, the British squadron pressed into the narrow sound. The *Inflexible*, because she was a square-rigged vessel, could not be handled there, nor could the formidable scow, but the swarms of gondolas and gunboats were as easily managed as the American vessels.

By the time Arnold, with the *Congress*, had formed his line the British were "within musket shot"—they were but forty or fifty yards away, and were veering to and fro to bring, now this broadside and now that to bear on the American squadron, while the Americans, meeting turn with turn and manœuvre with manœuvre, fought back without yielding a boat's length. The cannon, huge for the day and place, belched flame and smoke. The round shot bounded along the water to bury themselves in the soft-wood hulls of the ships or cut away the oars with which the hulls were managed, or flew wild to sink at last harmless. The grape-shot drove through the air in death-dealing squalls. The

Digitized by Google

roar of the conflict filled the valley and was echoed back from the mountains. The smoke clouds drifted into the evergreen forests on both shores of the little sound. The breath of hell mingled with the fragrant odors of balsams and spruce and hemlock. The forest spit flames and lead back at the Americans. Cry answered to cry and the yell of defiance to the war-whoop of the savage. Arnold himself, on the deck of the *Congress*, led in the thickest of the fight, cheering to the men as they worked at the guns, and at frequent intervals stooping over a gun to aim and fire it with his own hands.

The region around the scene of that battle is in these days the health resort of thousands in the summer season. We who see it now can hardly realize that it was the chosen haunt of Death on that bleak October day of 1776.

There is a paragraph in a report by Lieutenant Hadden, of the British forces, that relates to one branch of the British forces, and is worth quoting. He says:

"These savages under Major Carleton moved with the fleet in their canoes which were very regularly ranged. On the day of the battle, the rebels having no land force, the savages took post on the mainland and on Valcour Island. Thus being upon both flanks

Digitized by Google

The Fight on Lake Champlain, October 13, 1776.

1. (On right) Ship *Inflexible*. 2. Schooner *Carleton*. 3. Schooner *Maria* 4. *Congress* galley run ashore, with other vessels blowing up. 5. *Washington* galley striking. 6. Gunboat coming up.

From an English engraving published December 22, 1776.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

they were able to annoy them in the working of their guns. This had the effect of now and then obliging the rebels to turn a gun that way, which danger the savages avoided by getting behind trees."

And as for the result of the day's work, the quaint words of Arnold himself shall tell it:

"At half past 12 the engagement became general and very warm. Some of the enemy's ships and all their gondolas beat and rowed up within musket shot of us. They continued a very hot fire with round and grapeshot until 5 o'clock when they thought proper to retire to about six or seven hundred yards distance, and continued the fire till dark."

The fleet of the enemy, though manned by picked men—by men known not only for their bravery, but for their skill in handling the guns—was obliged to draw off to get beyond the range of the smaller guns on the American fleet.

The *Congress*, Arnold's flagship, was hulled by the British round shot no less than twelve times during the afternoon, and seven of these projectiles passed through her at the water-line. But the crew, farmers though they were, plugged her up and fought on as before. General Waterbury, who was on the *Washington*, fought her until he was the only officer left on deck—her captain, lieutenant, and

Digitized by Google

master having all been killed. The *Washington*, like the *Congress*, was full of holes when the fight ended. The *Philadelphia*, Captain Grant, sank within an hour after firing ceased.

On the whole, the American loss for the day was reported at "about sixty," while that of the British was less than forty. Two of the British gunboats were sunk and one was blown up.

The Americans had checked the enemy in his advance along the lake, and had damaged him materially, but they had suffered more than he had, and, what was worse, had used up nearly all their ammunition. "Being sensible that with his inferior and crippled force all resistance would be unavailing" on the morrow if they remained where they were, Arnold determined to slip away to the shelter of the American post either at Crown Point or at Ticonderoga.

The night came on dark and stormy and with a northerly gale driving over the lake. So the fleet up anchor, and "one following a [shaded] light on the stern of the other," they slipped through the enemy's line that lay across the south end of the channel, with Arnold on the *Congress* bringing up the rear, because that was the post of danger, and at daylight on the morning of Thursday, October

Digitized by Google

A View on Lake Champlain Showing the Fight of 1776.

From Hinton's History of the United States.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

12th, they were ten miles away and under the lee of Schuyler Island.

At this point the fleet came to anchor and began to make such repairs as were possible. Two gondolas were sunk because they were past remedy, and when the patching of the rest had been carried far enough to enable them to float without too much pumping, the fleet started on. Meantime, however, the wind shifted to the south, and the progress, depending on the oars, was necessarily slow.

But, although the wind retarded the American fleet, it had retarded the British as much, if not more. The British had discovered that the Americans were gone as soon as daylight came on Thursday morning, but so slow was the progress of the square-rigged *Inflexible* against the head-wind that it was not until Friday that the British were able to overtake the Americans.

The Americans were at this time just south of the narrow water at Split Rock. Arnold, with the *Congress* and the *Washington* and four smaller (three-gun) boats, was guarding the rear, and until noon there was an anxious race to escape to the shelter of Crown Point—anxious because the choice of the British fleet—the uninjured *Inflexible*, with the schooners *Carleton* and *Maria*—were in the van of the

Digitized by Google

chase, and Arnold's rowboats were together no match for the least of these.

But at noon, while yet some leagues from Crown Point, the tired crews of the flying boats had to drop their sweeps and take to the guns, for the British ships were upon them. The wind had shifted to the north once more, and the British vessels, of course, got it first.

No more desperate conflict is recorded in naval annals than that of Arnold that day.

At the first broadside of the enemy the shattered *Washington* was so injured that surrender was unavoidable. Nevertheless Arnold ranged up within musket-shot of the big *Inflexible* and continued to fight while the farmer crews of the four gondolas stood to their guns and faced the storm of shot and grape from the twelve-gun and fourteen-gun schooners—faced the storm unflinchingly until one-third of Arnold's crew had been killed, his boat reduced to a wreck, and resistance could no longer damage the enemy.

But, though beaten, the indomitable Americans were not conquered. They would never give up the ships. By Arnold's order the small galleys were run ashore in a creek near by and there fired, Arnold, in the *Congress*, covering their retreat until their crews were safe on shore, when he ran the *Congress* ashore also,

Digitized by Google

and then stood guard while his crew fired her, "remaining on board of her until she was in flames, lest the enemy should get possession and strike his flag, which was kept flying to the last."

When the *Congress* was so well on fire that she could not be saved, Arnold himself leaped overboard, waded ashore, formed his men in an orderly line, and marched away over a woodsy trail. He escaped the savages that were sent ashore seeking scalps, and safely reached Crown Point.

The best all-around fighter under George Washington was Benedict Arnold. As a leader in actual combat he was simply unequalled. Words cannot now be found to adequately express the pity of it when it is remembered that injustice and disappointment at the last drove him mad.

Although this fight on Lake Champlain was ordered on the American side by an army officer, and the crews were chiefly landsmen, it was unquestionably an exhibit of the early sea power of the United States, for the ships were built at the national expense and the crews were in the national service.

Of the results of the fight a few words must be written, because their value to the Americans was well-nigh inestimable under the circumstances. The American fleet had fought

Digitized by Google

COPY *of a* LETTER *from General Sir* GUY CARLETON *to Lord* GEORGE GERMAIN, *Principal Secretary of State for the* American *Department.*

On board the Maria off Crown-Point, October 14, 1776.

My Lord,

THE rebel fleet upon Lake Champlain has been entirely defeated in two actions; the firſt on the 11th inſtant, between the iſland of Valcourt and the main; and the ſecond on the 13th, within a few leagues of Crown-Point.

We have taken Mr. Waterburg, the ſecond in command, one of their brigadier-generals, with two of their veſſels, and ten others have been burnt and deſtroyed; only three of fifteen ſail, a liſt of which I tranſmit, having eſcaped. For further particulars I refer your Lordſhip to Lieutenant Dacres, who will be the bearer of this letter, and had a ſhare in both actions, particularly the firſt, where his gallant behaviour in the Carleton ſchooner, which he commanded, diſtinguiſhed him ſo much as to merit great commendation: and I beg to recommend him to your Lordſhip's notice and favour: at the ſame time I cannot omit taking notice to your Lordſhip of the good ſervice done, in the firſt action, by the ſpirited conduct of a number of officers and men of the corps of artillery, who ſerved the gun-boats, which, together with the Carleton, ſuſtained for many hours the whole fire of the enemy's fleet, the reſt of our veſſels not being able to work up near enough to join effectually in the engagement.

The rebels, upon the news reaching them of the defeat of their naval force, ſet fire to all the buildings and houſes in and near Crown-Point, and retired to Ticonderoga.

The ſeaſon is ſo far advanced, that I cannot yet pretend to inform your Lordſhip whether any thing farther can be done this year.

I am, &c.

GUY CARLETON.

Liſt of the Rebels Veſſels on Lake Champlain, *before their Defeat.*

Schooners
- Royal Savage, 8 ſix-pounders and 4 four-pounders——Went on ſhore, was ſet fire to, and blown up.
- Revenge, 4 ſix-pounders and 4 four-pounders——Eſcaped.

A ſloop, 10 four-pounders——Eſcaped.

Row-Galliot
- Congreſs, 2 eighteen-pounders in the bow, 2 twelve and 2 two-pounders in ſtern, and 6 ſix-pounders in the ſides—Blew up.
- Waſhington, ſame force——Taken.
- Trumble, ditto——Eſcaped.

The Lee, a cutter, 1 nine-pounder in the bow, 1 twelve-pounder in the ſtern, and 4 ſix-pounders in ſides——Run into a bay, and not known whether deſtroyed.

Gondolas
- Boſton, 1 eighteen-pounder in the bow, 2 twelve-pounders in ſides——Sunk.
- Jerſey, ditto——Taken.
- One, name unknown, ſame force——Run on ſhore.
- Five ditto, ditto——Blown up.

Other Veſſels not in the Action.

A ſchooner, 8 four-pounders—Sent from their fleet for proviſions.

A galley, ſaid to be of greater force than thoſe mentioned above——Fitting out at Ticonderoga.

G. C.

Facsimile of a copy of the original

Digitized by Google

[Over]

Deſcription of the Eng

COPY *of a* LETTER *from Captain* DOUGLAS, *of the Iſis, to Mr.* STEPHENS, *Secretary to the Admiralty.*

Quebec, 21ſt October, 1776.

HAVING for the ſpace of ſix weeks attended the naval equipment for the important expedition on Lake Champlain, I on the 4th inſtant ſaw, with unſpeakable joy, the re-conſtructed ſhip, now called the Inflexible, and commanded by Lieutenant Schank, her rebuilder, ſail from St. John's, twenty-eight days after her keel was laid, towards the place of rendezvous; taking in her 18 twelve-pounders beyond the ſhoal which is on this ſide the Iſle aux Noix, in her way up.

The prodigies of labour which have been effected ſince the rebels were driven out of Canada, in creating, re-creating, and equipping a fleet of above thirty fighting veſſels of different ſorts and ſizes, and all carrying cannon, ſince the beginning of July, together with the tranſporting over land, and afterwards dragging up the two rapids of St. Tereſe and St. John's, thirty long-boats, the flat-bottomed boats, a gondola weighing about thirty tons, and above four hundred batteaus, almoſt exceed belief. His Excellency the Commander in Chief of the army, and all the other generals, are of the opinion, that the ſailors of his Majeſty's ſhips and tranſports have (far beyond the uſual limits of their duty) exerted themſelves to the utmoſt on this great and toilſome occaſion; nor has a man of that profeſſion uttered a ſingle word expreſſive of diſcontent, amidſt all the hardſhips they have undergone, ſo truly patriotic are the motives by which they are actuated.—To crown the whole, above two hundred prime ſeamen of the tranſports, impelled by a due ſenſe of their country's wrongs, did moſt generouſly engage themſelves to ſerve in our armed veſſels during the expedition, and embarked accordingly. Such having then been our unremitting toils, I am happy beyond expreſſion in hereby acquainting my Lords Commiſſioners of the Admiralty, that the deſtruction of almoſt the whole of the rebel fleet, in two ſeveral battles on the eleventh and thirteenth inſtant, is our reward. I have recived a letter from Captain Pringle, of the Lord Howe armed ſhip, who commands the officers and ſeamen on the Lake, and who beſtows the higheſt encomiums on their behaviour in both engagements. The rebels did by no means believe it poſſible for us to get upon Lake Champlain this year; were much ſurprized at the firſt ſight of the van of our force; but ran into immediate and utter confuſion the moment a three-maſted ſhip made her appearance, being a phœnomenon they never ſo much as dreamt of. Thus have his Majeſty's faithful ſubjects here, (contrary to a crude but prevailing idea) by ſtraining every nerve in their country's cauſe, out-done them in working as much as in fighting. The ſhip Inflexible, with the Maria and Carleton ſchooners, all re-conſtructions, did the whole of the ſecond day's buſineſs, the flat-bottomed radeau called the Thunderer, and the gondola called the Loyal Convert, with the gun-boats, not having been able to keep up with them. The ſaid gondola was taken from the rebels the day the ſiege of Quebec was raiſed.—The loſs we have ſuſtained, conſidering the great ſuperiority of the inſurgents, is very ſmall, conſiſting of between thirty and forty men killed and wounded, ſeamen, ſoldiers, artillery-men, and all; eight whereof were killed outright, and ſix wounded, on board of the Carleton.—As to farther particulars, I muſt refer you to Lieutenant Dacres, who, in juſtice due to his merit, for the part he bore in deſtroying the rebel fleet, I am happy in ſending upon this occaſion to their Lordſhips in the Stag tranſport, as alſo in thereby complying with the General's deſire, who, for the ſame reaſon, is pleaſed to honour him with the conveyance of his diſpatches.

Printed for R. SAYER and J. BENNETT, Map, Chart, a

broadside at the Lenox Library.

Digitized by Google

agement on Lake CHAMPL

A Liſt of his Majeſty's Naval Forces on Lake Champlain.

Ship Inflexible, Lieutenant Schank, 18 twelve-pounders.
Schooner Maria, Lieutenant Starke, 14 ſix-pounders.
Schooner Carleton, Lieutenant Dacres, 12 ſix-pounders.
Radeau Thunderer, Lieutenant Scott, 6 twenty-four, 6 twelve-pounders; 2 howitzers.
Gondola Loyal Convert, Lieutenant Longcroft, 7 nine-pounders.
Twenty gun-boats, each a braſs field-piece, ſome twenty-fours to nines, ſome with howitzers.
Four long-boats, with each a carriage-gun, ſerving as armed tenders.
Twenty-four long-boats with proviſions.

A Liſt of the Seamen detached from his Majeſty's Ships and Veſſels in the River St. Lawrence, to ſerve on Lake Champlain.

		Seamen.	
	Iſis	100	
	Blonde	70	
	Triton	60	
	Garland	30	
	Canceaux	40	
	Magdalen, Brunſwick, Gaſpee	18	
	Treaſury arm'd Briggs	90	
	Fell	30	*Province armed Veſſels*
Lately wreck'd	Charlotte	9	
	Voluntiers from no ſhip	9	
	Do. from the Tranſports	214	
	Total	670	

Excluſive of 8 *officers, and* 19 *petty officers.*

COPY *of a* LETTER *from Captain* THOMAS PRINGLE.

On board the Maria, off Crown-Point, the 15*th of October*, 1776.

IT is with the greateſt pleaſure that I embrace this opportunity of congratulating their Lordſhips upon the victory compleated the 13th of this month, by his Majeſty's fleet under my command, upon Lake Champlain.

Upon the 11th I came up with the rebel fleet commanded by Benedict Arnold: they were at anchor under the iſland of Valicour, and formed a ſtrong line, extending from the iſland to the Weſt ſide of the continent. The wind was ſo unfavourable, that for a conſiderable time nothing could be brought into action with them but the gun-boats: the Carleton ſchooner, commanded by Mr. Dacres, (who brings their Lordſhips this,) by much perſeverance at laſt got to their aſſiſtance; but as none of the other veſſels of the fleet could then get up, I did not think it by any means adviſeable to continue ſo partial and unequal a combat; conſequently, with the approbation of his Excellency General Carleton, who did

Print Sellers, No. 53, FLEET-STREET. Price ONE SHILLING.

Digitized by Google

me the honor of being on board the Maria, I called off the Carleton and gun-boats, and brought the whole fleet to anchor in a line as near as poſſible to the rebels, that their retreat might be cut off; which purpoſe was, however, fruſtrated by the extreme obſcurity of the night; and in the morning the rebels had got a conſiderable diſtance from us up the Lake.

Upon the 13th I again ſaw eleven ſail of their fleet making off to Crown-Point, who, after a chace of ſeven hours, I came up with in the Maria, having the Carleton and Inflexible a ſmall diſtance a-ſtern; the reſt of the fleet almoſt out of ſight. The action began at twelve o'clock, and laſted two hours; at which time Arnold, in the Congreſs galley, and five gondolas, ran on ſhore, and were directly abandoned and blown up by the enemy; a circumſtance they were greatly favoured in, by the wind being off ſhore, and the narrowneſs of the Lake. The Waſhington galley ſtruck during the action, and the reſt made their eſcape to Ticonderoga.

The killed and wounded in his Majeſty's fleet, including the artillery in the gun-boats, do not amount to forty; but, from every information I have yet got, the loſs of the enemy muſt indeed be very conſiderable.

Many particulars which their Lordſhips may wiſh to know, I muſt, at preſent, take the liberty of referring you to Mr. Dacres for; but as I am well convinced his modeſty will not permit him to ſay how great a ſhare he had in this victory, give me leave to aſſure you, that during both actions nothing could be more pointedly good than his conduct. I muſt alſo do the juſtice the officers and ſeamen of this fleet merit, by ſaying that every perſon under my command exerted themſelves to act up to the character of Britiſh ſeamen.

A circumſtantial and authentic Account of the ROADS *and* DISTANCES *from* NEW-YORK *to* CROWN-POINT.

	Miles.
From New-York to King's-Bridge	15
King's Bridge to Conklin's	22
Conklin's to Croton's River	12
Croton's River to Peekſkill -	10
Peekſkill to Rogers in Highlands	9
Rogers in Highlands to Fiſhſkills	11
Fiſhſkills to Poughkeepſie -	14
Poughkeepſie to Staatſborough	11
Staatſborough to Rhynbeck -	6
Rhynbeck to Ryer Shermerhorns	10
Ryer Shermerhorns to Rininſton's Manor - -	14
Rininſton's Manor to Claverack	7
Claverack to Kenderhook -	14
Kenderhook to Halfway-houſe	10
Halfway-houſe to Albany - -	10
Albany to Saratoga -	36
Saratoga to Fort Edward - -	20
Fort Edward to Lake George	14
Lake George to Tieonderoga	30
Ticonderoga to Crown Point	15
In all	290

Digitized by Google

to the last gasp. It was well-nigh exterminated, but it had not suffered in vain. It taught the British that the Americans were not only willing, but they were able fighters. In spite of the tremendous odds against them, at the last they had proved themselves as unyielding as the rocks that echoed back the roar of the conflict. Their stubborn wills bade the ambitious Carleton pause and consider. If, with a shattered hulk, they had kept the three best British vessels on the lake at bay until the gondolas were aground and on fire, and if they were then still able to make such a murderous fight as enabled them to fire and burn the last ship with its flag flying till burned away, what would they not do in resisting the British were an attack made on Ticonderoga?

The thought was cooling to the ardor of even Carleton. Worse yet, should he succeed in taking Ticonderoga, these unyielding Yankees would contest every rod of the long wilderness route with a skill that excelled that of Carleton's best men. And that settled the question that had arisen in Carleton's mind—the question of the advisability of continuing on his course. As a most excellent account of this fight, which appeared in Dodsley's (London) "Annual Register" says, "the strength of the works, the difficulty of approach, the countenance of the enemy, and the ignorance of

Digitized by Google

their number, with other cogent reason, prevented this design from taking place."

Having looked upon "the countenance of the enemy," Sir Guy Carleton changed his mind. He decided to return to Canada. The most glorious defeat in the annals of the American navy had saved the nation from an invasion that would have severed it in twain, and probably whelmed its forces in utter defeat.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

UNDER THE CRAGS OF THE "TIGHT LITTLE ISLE"

THE SAUCY YANKEE CRUISERS IN BRITISH WATERS — WHEN FRANKLIN SAILED FOR FRANCE — WICKES IN THE *REPRISAL* ON THE IRISH COAST—NARROW ESCAPE FROM A LINER—A PLUCKY ENGLISH LIEUTENANT—HARSH FATE OF THE AMERICANS IN THE BRITISH PRISON—STARVED BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT—DEEDS OF THE GALLANT CONNYNGHAM—WELL-NAMED CRUISERS—A SURPRISE AT A BREAKFAST TABLE—TAKING PRIZES DAILY—WHY FORTY FRENCH SHIPS LOADED IN THE THAMES—INSURANCE RATES NEVER BEFORE KNOWN.

SIGNAL as has been the value of the services of the little vessels of the infant navy of the United States in their operations along the American coast and upon the woodsy waters of the highway from the north during the year of the nation's birth, the American sailors had really only just begun to fight, and it was not until they carried the fight into the very harbors of Great Britain that they taught the British merchants, who had been supporting the British ministry in its oppression of the colonies, a lesson they were slow to learn. For the British merchants had looked upon the war in America as a blessing upon their

Digitized by Google

business interests. It would be somewhat expensive in the way of taxation, but it would ruin their competitors, the enterprising colonists. It is in the spirit of trade and tradesmen of all classes to view with complacency the little expenses that ruin competitors. But some of the British merchants who rubbed their hands and smiled with satisfaction as they heard of the retreat of Washington across New Jersey in 1776, were to wring them in distress because of wounds in their pockets before the end of 1777—because of ships that were snatched away from under the very crags of what they were pleased to term their "tight little isle."

"In the meantime the irruption of the *Phœnix* and the *Rose* into the waters of the Hudson had roused a belligerent spirit along its borders." These were the first British warships to sail up the Hudson in the Revolutionary war, and their advent was in July, 1776. The Americans had no ships to send against them, and they commonly remained at anchor out of reach of shore batteries. It was because of their presence that it was proposed to stretch an iron chain across the river at Anthony's Nose. Other obstructions were prepared, but the only thing done in the way of going afloat to attack them was when some rafts were brought down the river chained

Digitized by Google

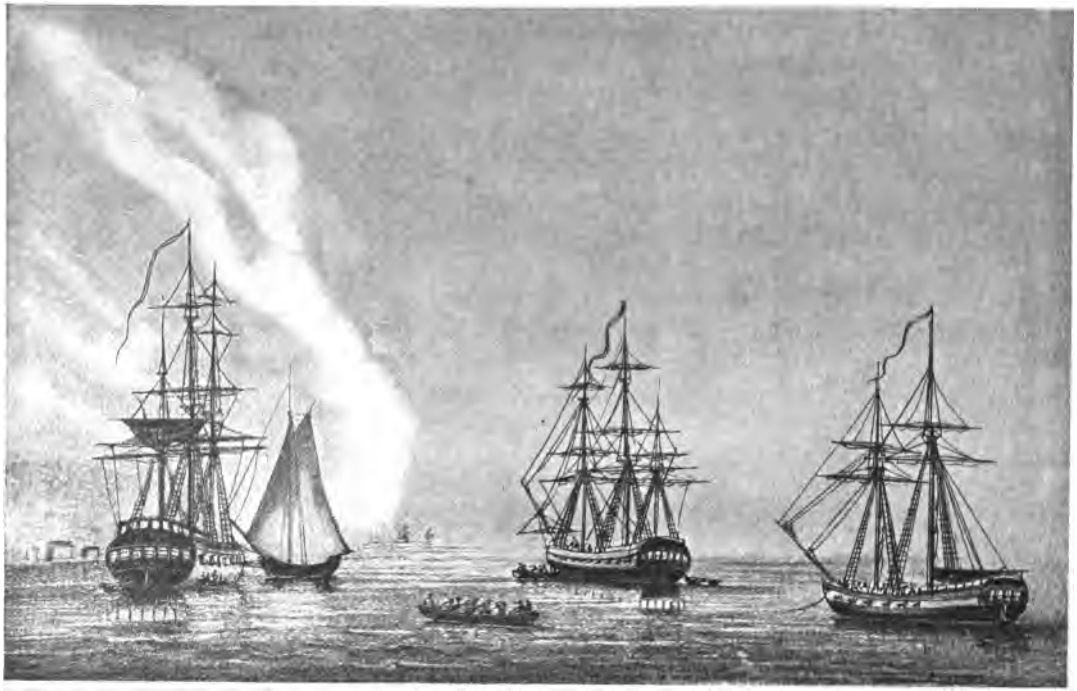
between a couple of old sloop hulls, the whole of which were covered with dry fat, pine, tar, turpentine, etc. These were fired and let drift with the tide, but as a substitute for the modern torpedoes they were not successful.

The war was, indeed, carried across the stormy Atlantic in the autumn of 1776, though only a small beginning was made that year. To Capt. Lambert Wickes was given the honor of commanding the first American naval ship to cross the Atlantic. Captain Wickes, while in command of the sixteen-gun brig *Reprisal*, had, as already told, made such a good fight when attacked by the British sloop-of-war *Shark* off Martinique that he beat her off and escaped. For this he was chosen to carry Franklin, who had been appointed American commissioner to France, across to Nantes.

Not only did Wickes carry his passenger safely into port; he captured two prizes on the way and sent them into port also. And then, after refitting in Nantes, he went on a cruise in the Bay of Biscay, where he captured two more prizes, of which one was the king's mail packet plying between Falmouth and Lisbon, it being the custom in those days for the British government to employ swift brigs of the navy on the regular mail routes.

France and England were at peace at that time, but by carrying the prizes out to sea,

Digitized by Google



The *Phœnix* and the *Rose* Engaging the Fireships on the Hudson River.

From a lithograph of the painting by Serres after a sketch by Sir James Wallace.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

after they had been successfully brought to port, they were readily sold to French merchants, and the money was placed in the hands of Franklin and the other American commissioner, Silas Deane.

What with the enthusiasm that arose when he saw two prizes taken under his own eyes, and the satisfaction arising from having his scanty means augmented by the price of the prizes, Franklin joined heartily with the other commissioners in urging upon the Congress the advisability of keeping a naval force on the European side of the water, with French ports as a base of action. "We have not the least doubt but that two or three of the Continental frigates sent into the German Ocean, with some less swift-sailing cruisers, might intercept and seize a great part of the Baltic and northern trade." So wrote Franklin.

The Congress had been building some frigates, but instead of sending one of them the brig *Lexington*, armed with sixteen long four-pounders (a brig of which something was told in a former chapter), was sent across, under command of Capt. Henry Johnson. Meantime the American commissioners purchased a ten-gun cutter called the *Dolphin*, which they placed under the command of Lieut. Samuel Nicholson, who afterwards died at the head of the American navy.

Digitized by Google

The *Lexington* arrived out in April, 1777. In June this fleet of two small brigs and one "single-sticker" sailed out of Nantes, under command of Captain Wickes, to prey upon British commerce.

It had been the boast of the British sailor, and it was still his boast, that

"Not a sail but by permission spreads."

He sang his boast over his grog; but he was mistaken. Captain Wickes, after a brief cruise in the Bay of Biscay, sailed north to intercept a fleet loaded with linen on the Irish coast. He missed the linen ships, but he sailed twice around Ireland, and captured fifteen prizes, which were sent into port.

On coming back to the French coast the little fleet fell in with a British ship of the line —a big three-decker—that at once gave chase. The three Americans separated, and the Englishman followed the flagship *Reprisal.*

That was a close call for the *Reprisal.* Her crew at the last felt so hard pressed that they threw their guns overboard to lighten her, and "sawed her bulwarks and even cut away some of her timbers; expedients that were much in favor among the seamen of the day." She arrived safely at the last, but the sawing of her timbers was a mortal wound, as will appear further on.

Digitized by Google

Not in years had the British commerce received such a blow, although this was only a trifle to what followed. A storm was raised in France by the British agents. The two countries were nominally at peace, and the French king was not yet ready for war. So the *Reprisal* and the *Lexington* were ordered to leave France, "while the prizes were ordered to leave port."

As to the prizes, they were taken out of port and sold as others had been sold. The *Reprisal* sailed for America, but in a storm off the banks of Newfoundland she foundered, no doubt because her frames had been weakened by the sawing when she was fleeing before the British ship of the line. One man, the cook, was picked from the wreckage by a passing vessel.

The *Lexington* was captured on September 20, 1777. She had refitted at Morlaix, whither she had gone when chased by the line-of-battle ship. When ordered to sail she had not a full supply of powder on board, but was, nevertheless, forced to go. She sailed on September 18th, and when two days outside of the port she fell in with the man-of-war cutter *Alert*, commanded by Lieutenant Bazely, and Bazely was one of the fighters of whom British seamen have a right to be proud. His cutter was smaller than the *Lexington*, and she had but

Digitized by Google

IOHN BAZELY ESQ.R

Vice Admiral

of the Red Squadron

Digitized by Google

ten cannon to the *Lexington's* sixteen. The wind was strong and the sea was rough for such light vessels, but Bazely forced a fight, and for two hours and a half held his own. At the end of that time, however, his rigging had been so badly hurt that he had to stop fighting and make repairs. Seeing this, the *Lexington*, having expended all but a trifle of her ammunition, made sail for home, and she would have got away had any one but the plucky Bazely commanded the *Alert*. Bazely made repairs, overhauled the *Lexington*, and again opened fire. The *Lexington* held on her course for an hour without being able to reply, and in the hope that the wind would carry away some of the cutter's sails. But the cutter was well found, and the *Lexington* was carried into Plymouth. Lieutenant Bazely lived to become an admiral, and there is no doubt he earned his promotion.

The fate of the *Lexington's* crew, because like that of every American cruiser of those days, shall be told somewhat in detail. They were thrown into jail without trial on a charge of high treason, and there they were deliberately starved. On one occasion they were glad to kill and eat a dog that strayed into their yard. The conduct of the prison officials in their bearing toward the prisoners was insufferably brutal.

Digitized by Google

Because the assertion that the prisoners were deliberately starved may seem to some readers an exaggeration, the proof of the statement shall be given from an English source. It may be found on page 152 of the "Annual Register for the Year 1781," published by G. Robinson, Paternoster Row, London. In reporting the proceedings of Parliament for June 20th of that year it says:

"A petition was presented to the house by Mr. Fox from the American prisoners in Mill Prison, Plymouth, setting forth that they were treated with less humanity than the French and Spaniards; that they had not a sufficient allowance of bread, and were very scantily furnished with clothing. A similar petition was presented to the house of peers by the Duke of Richmond. It appeared upon inquiry that the American prisoners were allowed half a pound of bread less per day than French or Spanish prisoners. Several motions were grounded on these petitions, but those proposed by the lords and gentlemen of the opposition were determined in the negative, and others to exculpate the government in this business were resolved in the affirmative."

Neither the French nor the Spanish were fully fed, but by the deliberate vote of Parlia-

Digitized by Google

ment the Americans received half a pound of bread less per man each day than did the French and Spanish.

At one time prisoners escaped by tunnelling under the prison walls, and in London got on board a vessel bound for Dunkirk. But a press-gang found them and dragged them back to the jail. Among their number was Master's Mate Richard Dale. A year after he was recaptured he procured a British uniform. How he got it he would never tell, not even when the war was over, and it is therefore not unlikely that a woman brought it to him. With that on, he walked out of the jail in open day and escaped.

Meantime another American cruiser had been at work on the British coasts with notable results. The American commissioners in France had purchased a fast cutter, which they equipped as a man-of-war. They named her the *Surprise*, and that proved to be a very appropriate name. Capt. Gustavus Connyngham was placed in charge of her, his commission being one of the blank ones which had been given to the commissioners to fill out at their own discretion. It was dated March 1, 1777, and Captain Connyngham got away to sea on May 1st, but he had a deal of trouble before he found himself fairly afloat. To avoid complications with the French gov-

Digitized by Google

ernment he was obliged to send ashore all his cannon and warlike supplies and load his vessel with merchandise for Norway. In this way he left port. Then, when well outside, he met by appointment a vessel that had his equipment and crew, and effected a transfer. But the government had suspected that he was going to do this, and had compelled him to give bonds not to do it. Two men were hired to sign the bond, but one of them found he had made a bad bargain, even though he had signed it with his eyes open, for when the first prize made by the *Surprise* came in he was haled away to the Bastile, while the prize, in which he was to have a share, no doubt, was given up to the English without legal process. The names of the bondsmen are recorded simply as "Allen and Hodge." Hodge was the chief unfortunate, but he was released after six weeks.

The prize was the ship *Joseph*. She was captured the third day out. Four days later (May 7th), while cruising off the coast of Holland, the *Surprise* fell in with the British packet brig *Prince of Orange*, carrying the mail to the north of Europe, and having a number of passengers on board.

It is likely that no ship's company were ever more completely surprised than were the people on the *Prince of Orange*. It was early in the

Digitized by Google

forenoon when the *Surprise* came alongside and carried the packet by boarding. Not a gun was fired, and so little noise was made that not a soul below decks knew that anything out of the usual course was occurring until the Yankee captain coolly walked down the companionway and found the captain of the *Prince of Orange* and his passengers eating breakfast very comfortably.

Because of the mails on board this packet Captain Connyngham decided to carry his prize into port at once.

It will be remembered that the capture of this mail packet happened but a few weeks after the capture of the Lisbon packet. So, as may be supposed, the arrival of the *Surprise*, with the *Prince of Orange* as a prize, created a tremendous excitement among the English. The British ambassador at Paris demanded that Connyngham and his crew be surrendered for trial as pirates, and threatened to leave the country if the demand was not complied with. As the French government was not yet ready for war, and the firm attitude of the English compelled seeming compliance with the demand, Connyngham was arrested and his commission taken away from him. The British ambassador sent for two sloops-of-war to come over and convoy the *Surprise* and the *Prince of Orange* across to

Digitized by Google

England. For a time it looked as if the audacious Americans would really be hanged as pirates by the infuriated Englishmen.

But in those days much time was required for completing matters of diplomacy, and the American commissioners, with their agents, were working day and night not only to save Captain Connyngham, but to send him once more on a cruise against the enemy. Another swift cutter was procured and secretly armed with fourteen six-pounders and twenty swivels, while a crew of 106 men was shipped. The new man-of-war was very properly named the *Revenge*, and before the sloops-of-war had arrived from England Captain Connyngham had, "with some address and intrigue," been released from prison and supplied with a new commission and sent away to sea.

It was on July 18, 1777, that the *Revenge* left port, and she was the fifth ship of the American navy to cruise in England's home waters. If the *Surprise* had astonished the British seafaring folks, the *Revenge* astounded them. And it must not be forgotten that the little fleet of three vessels under Captain Wickes had already gone to sea on the same errand.

It is recorded that the *Revenge* "proved a remarkably successful vessel, taking prizes daily," which were, for the most part, sent to

Digitized by Google

Spanish ports and sold. The means so obtained were of the utmost value to the American commissioners already in Europe and to those who came after, while the damage inflicted on the British marine was, as already intimated, something to make the British merchant wonder whether, after all, his investments for the ruin of American rivals were likely to prove profitable. Nor was the injury felt alone by those British merchants whose ships happened to be captured. The insurance rates on all British ships rose at one period to twenty-five per cent., and ten per cent. was demanded for the simple voyage from Dover to Calais. Worse yet, the fear of the Yankee cruisers became so great that shipments in British vessels were so far abandoned that "*forty sail of French ships* were loading in the Thames on freight; an instance never before known." An escort was asked for and received for British ships in the trade with Ireland, "something that had never been known even in the wars with France."

But the best of the story of Captain Connyngham's cruise remains to be told. Having been considerably injured by a gale, the captain felt obliged to go into port for repairs. To return to a French port was extremely dangerous because the whole French coast was closely watched and because even were

Digitized by Google

he found safely in port he would be very likely delivered over to the English, so he sought safety in audacity and found it. Disguising his cutter as best he might with the paint and materials in store, he entered an English port (the name of which is not recorded), thoroughly refitted, and sailed away unsuspected. Some time later he entered an Irish port and got a full supply of provisions, paying for them with drafts on his agent in Spain. Later still he refitted at Ferrol, and then sailed for America.

It is not uncommon for people to speak in these days of such deeds as Captain Connyngham's as if they were something of the past that might never be repeated. They do not realize that every class graduated from the Naval Academy at Annapolis contains men of equal bravery and resources—men needing only the opportunity to show their metal.

It must be noted here that the British ministry chose to make a distinction between the two ships fitted out wholly in the French ports (the *Surprise* and the *Revenge*) and those that had come over from America; they made a distinction in spite of the fact that these two were fitted out by the American commissioners of the American government that had maintained itself for a year. The *Surprise* and the *Revenge* were denounced as pirates, and Connyngham as a pirate commander.

Digitized by Google

Unfortunately for Connyngham, he was captured in a privateer early the following year after his cruise on the English coast. What treatment he then received cannot be given in detail here, but if the British authorities were willing to starve the prisoners from the *Lexington*, which was then conceded to be a lawful ship of war, one may rest assured that it would have been kinder to Connyngham to hang him out of hand. He would, indeed, have been hanged but for the fear of retributive justice being meted out to prisoners in the hands of the Americans. So, to put it bluntly, they tortured whom they dared not kill, until the Congress, on July 17, 1778, passed a resolution formally demanding the reason why he was "treated in a manner contrary to all the dictates of humanity and the practice of civilized nations." And yet, in spite of the pitiful sufferings of Connyngham and the other American seamen in British prisons, it was not until July 15, 1779, that Congress resolved to "cause the crews of vessels captured from the enemy to be confined on board prison ships and supplied and treated, in all respects, in the same manner as the crews of vessels belonging to these United States, and captured by the enemy, are supplied and treated."

The story of the early doings of the Amer-

Digitized by Google

ican navy concludes with the loss of the first American flagship, the *Alfred*.

It will be remembered that the Congress had, late in 1775, ordered quite a fleet of small frigates built at different points along the coast—thirteen in all. Of the whole number, six never got to sea, for they were captured in port by the victorious British. Among those that finally carried the flag was the *Raleigh*, a thirty-two-gun vessel, built at Portsmouth, and a very fair ship for that time she proved to be. Toward the end of August, 1777, the Marine Committee ordered the *Raleigh*, under the command of Capt. Thomas Thompson, and the original flagship *Alfred*, which was still under the command of Capt. Elisha Hinman, to sail for France to procure supplies for the American army.

The two ships had been at sea only a few days, when, on September 2d, they fell in with a small English merchantman called the *Nancy*, that surrendered without a stroke. From her captain they learned that she had gone adrift the day before from a big fleet bound to the Windward Islands under convoy of one twenty-gun ship, two fourteen-gun brigs, and one sixteen-gun sloop.

On learning this Captain Thompson carefully noted the positions of the different men-of-war in the squadron, and learned the code

Digitized by Google

of signals in use in the fleet, the necessary flags for signalling having been taken from the *Nancy*. He then headed away in pursuit.

At noon on the 3d he had overhauled the fleet, and from that time until daylight of the 4th he was busy trying to cut out some of the merchantmen without exciting suspicion. By signalling to the *Alfred* with the captured code, he succeeded in concealing his character effectually; but on the morning of the 4th he gave up the hope of getting a merchantman, and sought a fight instead. Leaving the *Alfred*, that was too slow for the enterprise, behind, he steered with closed ports right through the fleet until in an advantageous position on the weather side of one of the brigs, the *Druid*, when he opened up his ports, set his flag, and fired a broadside into the unsuspecting Britisher.

The effect of the broadside upon the other ships of the fleet was picturesque. Everywhere the pipe of the boatswain to call all hands was heard. On every ship the men ran to and fro to crowd on sail, while every tiller was thrown up or down as every ship strove to get as far away from every other ship as possible. For no one knew what minute another supposed cargo-carrier would prove to be a Yankee warship.

Meantime Captain Thompson fired volley

Digitized by Google

after volley into the *Druid*, receiving only a feeble fire in return, until the brig was so well wrecked that she had to return to England. Her loss, according to Captain Carteret, who commanded her, was six killed and twenty-six wounded, he himself being among the severely wounded.

But, although badly cut up, the *Druid* did not surrender; and when the other two warships, with several of the best-armed merchantmen who had recovered from the panic, drew near, the *Raleigh* squared away and returned to the *Alfred*.

Rightly considered, it was not an exploit to excite the pride of the American naval officer, for the *Raleigh* had more guns than the two brigs together, and should have been almost a match for all three of the warships. American sailors had not yet reached the efficiency as man-o'-warsmen that afterwards made them famous.

However, the two American ships reached France, and loaded their supplies. On returning they took the southern route, hoping to meet some British merchant ships. They met, instead of merchantmen, two British men-of-war—the *Ariadne* of twenty guns and the *Ceres* of fourteen.

It happened that the two Americans were at the time (it was on March 9, 1778) far

Digitized by Google

apart, the *Raleigh* being hull down to leeward. The two Britishers came down on the *Alfred*, and without making very much of a fight she surrendered. Seeing this, the *Raleigh* up helm and sailed for home, where, on his arrival, the captain was very properly relieved from the command of the ship. What John Paul Jones would have accomplished had he been in command of the *Raleigh* that voyage, instead of Thompson, may be inferred from what he did when a command was given him, as will be told in the next chapter.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

JOHN PAUL JONES AND THE *RANGER*

THE FIRST SHIP THAT CARRIED THE STARS AND STRIPES—DASH AT A CONVOY THAT FAILED—WHEN THE DUTCH WERE BROWBEATEN—THE *RANGER* SENT ON A CRUISE IN ENGLISH WATERS—A SHIP TAKEN OFF DUBLIN—THE RAID ON WHITEHAVEN—WHEN ONE BRAVE MAN COWED MORE THAN A THOUSAND—THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT LORD SELKIRK'S SILVERWARE, WITH THE NOBLE LORD'S EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE WHEN HE GOT IT BACK—HOW CAPTAIN JONES MISSED THE *DRAKE* AT FIRST, BUT GOT HER LATER ON IN A FAIR AND WELL-FOUGHT BATTLE.

A MOST important date in the history of the United States is June 14, 1777, for on that day it was in Congress "*Resolved*, That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white, in a blue field, representing a new constellation." In the annals of the navy it is also important, from the fact that on that day Capt. John Paul Jones was appointed to the eighteen-gun ship *Ranger*, which had been built at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Repairing at once to his post, Captain Jones, in placing his ship in commission, hoisted with his own hand the new-made flag of the Union,

Digitized by Google

and that was the first occasion on which "old glory" was spread to the breeze on an American naval ship. Thereafter every effort was made to get away to sea, but the difficulties which the struggling Americans had to overcome in obtaining supplies were so great that the *Ranger* did not sail until November 1st.

The destination of the *Ranger* was Nantes, France, and her mission in European waters was to carry on the work begun in such famous fashion by the *Reprisal*, the *Lexington*, the *Surprise*, and the *Revenge*.

On the way over Captain Jones, when not far from the Azores, sighted a fleet of ten well-guarded merchantmen. The warships were too heavy for the *Ranger*, and the merchant ships kept so close to their protectors that it was impossible to cut one of them out of the fleet. The *Ranger* was not swift enough for such a purpose. The Yankee ship-builder had not yet learned the art of building men-of-war.

After leaving the convoy nothing happened save the capture of two small English brigs in the fruit trade, and on December 2d the *Ranger* was at anchor in the harbor of Nantes, then one of the most flourishing of French ports.

At that time the American commissioners in France were Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane,

Digitized by Google

IN CONGRESS.

The DELEGATES of the UNITED STATES of *New Hampshire, Massachusetts-Bay, Rhode-Island, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North-Carolina, South-Carolina,* and *Georgia,* TO

John Paul Jones, Esqr.

WE, repoſing eſpecial Truſt and Confidence in your Patriotiſm, Valour, Conduct, and Fidelity, DO, by theſe Preſents, conſtitute and appoint you to be *Captain* of the ~~armed~~ ~~called the~~ *Navy* in the Service of the United States of North-America, fitted out for the Defence of American Liberty, and for repelling every hoſtile Invaſion thereof. You are therefore carefully and diligently to diſcharge the Duty of *Captain* by doing and performing all manner of Things thereunto belonging. And we do ſtrictly charge and require all Officers, Marines and Seamen under your Command, to be obedient to your Orders as *Captain* And you are to obſerve and follow ſuch Orders and Directions from Time to Time as you ſhall receive from this or a future Congreſs of the United States, or Committee of Congreſs for that Purpoſe appointed, or Commander in Chief for the Time being of the Navy of the United States, or any other your ſuperior Officer, according to the Rules and Diſcipline of War, the Uſage of the Sea, and the Inſtructions herewith given you, in Purſuance of the Truſt repoſed in you. This Commiſſion to continue in Force until revoked by this or a future Congreſs:

DATED at *Philadelphia October 10th 1776.*

By Order of the CONGRESS,

John Hancock

PRESIDENT.

ATTEST. *Chas Thomson jun.*

From the Original in poſſeſſion of Gl. John H. Sherburne, Author of "The Life and Character of John Paul Jones."

Digitized by Google

and Arthur Lee. The commissioners had been secretly building a fine frigate in Holland—the finest afloat it was to be—but the able British minister at Amsterdam discovered the ownership of the new vessel and made such a vigorous protest that the Dutch were obliged to refuse to let the Americans have her.

That was a great disappointment to Captain Jones, but he cheerfully obeyed the orders of the commissioners, who decided that "after equipping the *Ranger* in the best manner for the cruise you shall proceed with her in the manner you shall judge best for distressing the enemies of the United States, by sea or otherwise, consistent with the laws of war."

Accordingly on February 10, 1778, the *Ranger* sailed from Nantes, having in convoy several American merchant ships that were bound home, and that were to be placed in charge of a French squadron then lying in Quiberon Bay (Brest) and bound eventually for America; for France had by this time acknowledged the United States as an independent nation, and had decided to openly aid the Americans in their fight for liberty.

On reaching Quiberon Bay he had the great satisfaction of seeing the French admiral salute the American flag after the *Ranger* had, under the custom of such occasions, saluted the French flag. It was an honor especially grati-

Digitized by Google

fying for the reason that this was the first occasion on which a foreign power saluted the Stars and Stripes.

Having overhauled his rigging and taken on additional supplies, Captain Jones sailed from Brest on April 10, 1778, and steered across to the coast of England. Passing between the Scilly Islands and Cape Clear, he overhauled a brig loaded with flax bound from Ireland to Ostend. As she was of small value he scuttled her, and to save himself the bother of prisoners, sent her crew ashore in their boat, for the capture was made in plain view of the land. This was done on April 14th. Three days later he was off Dublin, where he seized the ship *Lord Chatham* and sent her to Brest.

Thereafter he headed away to Whitehaven, that is found a short distance south of the Clyde. It was a port with which Jones was entirely familiar, for there he had passed his childhood. It was his intention to burn the shipping which, as he knew, thronged the harbor. He arrived off the harbor at ten o'clock at night of the same day he captured the *Lord Chatham*, but a gale of wind prevented his landing, so he cruised on to the north. The next day (April 18th) the *Ranger* chased a revenue cutter that escaped him, but on the 19th he sank a coasting schooner loaded with barley.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Thereafter he continued his cruise to the north. The weather prevented an attack on a fleet of merchantmen with a man-of-war at Lochryan, so the *Ranger* was headed across to the Bay of Carrickfergus, Ireland, at the head of which lies the city of Belfast. A fisherman picked up outside told Captain Jones that the man-of-war *Drake*, a ship that mounted twenty guns and was a larger ship and carried more men than the *Ranger*, lay at anchor inside.

All this was learned on April 21st. That night Captain Jones undertook capturing the *Drake* as she lay at anchor. Waiting until night had fully come, he stood up the bay, in spite of a freshening gale, until he saw the *Drake* lying at anchor and rolling gently to the swell. At that the *Ranger* was brought up into the wind almost beneath the jib-boom of the *Drake*, and then Captain Jones ordered his anchor let go.

Had his order been obeyed instantly, the *Ranger* would have swung to her cable down across the cable of the enemy and then yard-arm to yardarm fair alongside.

Knowing nothing of the presence of an American man-of-war in those waters, the crew of the *Drake* would have been found in their hammocks and the *Ranger* would have carried her by boarding, with little if any loss of life.

Unfortunately, the *Ranger's* anchor was not

Digitized by Google

dropped at the word, and when, at last, it did catch in the mud, Captain Jones found himself between the *Drake* and a lee shore and too far astern for effective firing. The *Ranger* was, in fact, in almost as bad a situation as that in which Jones had intended to place the *Drake*. To remain was to invite destruction, so the *Ranger's* cable was cut the instant she brought a strain upon it, and she was headed out into the bay for another attempt at the same manœuvre, leaving the anchor watch of the *Drake* to wonder what possessed the crew of what they supposed was an especially ill-managed merchantman.

However, the second attempt was not made. The weather came on fierce and cold, and the next morning, from his deck in the North Channel, Captain Jones saw the hills on both shores white with snow. So he headed away for another attempt on the shipping at Whitehaven.

Because the attempt on Whitehaven has been more persistently misrepresented by British writers than any other act of the Revolutionary war it is necessary to give not only the exact facts, but the reasons which influenced Jones as an American naval officer in making the descent. To fully appreciate his motives, it is only necessary to recall but a few incidents of the British onslaught upon the Americans

Digitized by Google

—to recall the burning of Portland, Maine, by Captain Mowatt, who "dispersed at a late season of the year, hundreds of helpless women and children, with a savage hope that those may perish under the approaching rigours of the season, who may chance to escape destruction from fire and sword"—to recall that among the accounts which Sir Guy Carleton turned in for audit to the British Parliament was one item of "five gross of scalping knives," which he distributed to the savages under his command for use on the unfortunate Americans that they might fall upon, and which were used for scalping women and children as well as prisoners of war.

John Paul Jones went ashore on the British coast to burn the British shipping and no more. He was determined to "put an end, by one good fire of shipping, to all the burnings in America." He was also determined to capture an earl to hold as a hostage, and compel a brutal enemy to treat captured Americans as civilized nations have always treated prisoners of war. He missed the earl, and his men took the earl's silver plate to the value of £500, which plate Jones purchased afterwards with his own money, and returned to the earl with a manly letter.

In view of the barbarities of which the English had been guilty in America, and of

Digitized by Google

An English Caricature of John Paul Jones.

("From an original drawing taken from the Life on board the Serapis.")
Published in London, October 22, 1779.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

the retaliation which self-defence as well as justice demanded, John Paul Jones, after his cruise along the coast, might well and righteously have used the words which a titled British robber of the helpless used when brought before Parliament to answer for his crimes: "By God, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation."

After one hundred years have passed away it is safe to say that every American who reads of the events of the American Revolution stands astonished at the moderation of the fathers.

As to the facts of the descent on Whitehaven, they may be soon told. Lowering two boats after the *Ranger* had arrived, Captain Jones ordered fifteen men, armed with cutlasses and pistols, into each. Then he placed Lieutenant Wallingsford in charge of one, and took the other himself. Unfortunately, one of the crew, a man named David Freeman, had shipped with the express purpose of serving the English whenever opportunity offered.

It is said that 220 vessels, great and small, lay in Whitehaven harbor, of which 150 were on the south side, where the town stood, and the remainder were on the north. Nearly if not quite all had been left aground by the ebb tide—the tide that prevented Jones reaching the shipping until daylight. Wallingsford

Digitized by Google

was sent to fire the shipping at the north, while Jones landed at the town.

Whitehaven was guarded at that time by two forts of fifteen guns each. With his single boat's crew Jones ran to the nearest one. The sentinels, greatly alarmed, fled into the guard-house, where Jones locked them in. Then he spiked the guns. At the other fort, a quarter of a mile away, he was equally successful.

Turning, then, to see the flames rising from the ships across the harbor, he found that nothing had been done to them. Lieutenant Wallingsford's failure to obey orders has been variously accounted for, but whatever his error may have been, he wiped it out by fighting for the flag till he died in the battle of two days later.

Seeing his plan partly frustrated, Captain Jones hastened back to the water-front, and with his own hands built a fire on a large vessel in the midst of the fleet, using a brand which he had snatched from the breakfast fire in the kitchen of a nearby house. To increase the flames, he broke open and spilled a barrel of tar over the light-wood he was firing.

Meantime the deserter had been alarming the town. "The inhabitants began to appear in thousands." There must have been not less than 1,200 sailors alone among the 150 ships

Digitized by Google

lying there. As the flames mounted in air above the burning ship the men of the town came down *en masse*, but Jones stood between them and the fire, and, with pistol in hand, "ordered them to retire, which they did with precipitation." Men in a crowd numbering hundreds fell over each other to get out of range. A more amusing instance of the power of a resolute man over a mob will rarely be found in history.

For fifteen minutes John Paul Jones, single-handed, held at bay more than a thousand men. Then he entered his boat and rowed away, leaving the townsmen to fight the fire and shed tears of gratitude over the deserter who had saved them from destruction at the hands of fifteen men armed with cutlasses and flint-locked, single-barrelled, shoot-if-you-are-lucky pistols!

When Jones was well out in the bay the people found a couple of cannon which Jones had overlooked. These they loaded and fired. And Jones, recalling the time when a frigate had chased his brig in the Canadian waters, fired a pistol in return.

From Whitehaven Jones sailed over to the Isle of St. Mary, landed with a force of men, and surrounded the house of the Earl of Selkirk. It was the avowed object of this landing to carry away the earl, "and to have

Digitized by Google

detained him until, through his means, a general and fair exchange of prisoners, as well in Europe as in America, had been effected." It was to ameliorate the condition of the Americans, held in jail and deliberately starved, that Captain Jones landed.

Finding that the earl was not at home, the men in the landing party called on their commander to take the silverware from the castle as fair plunder and but a just revenge for the acts of British sailors in America, who had not only looted the homes of the rich, but had driven off the one cow and the one pig of the laborer. Captain Jones permitted them to do so. The following is the British account of the affair, taken from Dodsley's "Annual Register" (London) for 1778. On page 177 it says:

"Edinburgh, April 27. The following are the particulars of the plundering of Lord Selkirk's house by the crew of the *Ranger*, American privateer.

"On the 23d of April, about ten o'clock in the morning, 30 armed men came in a boat from a privateer of 20 guns, and pretending at first to be a press gang, the men surrounded the house, and the officers entered and desired to see the heads of the family. As Lord Selkirk was then at London, Lady Selkirk made her appearance. They soon made known to her who they really were; said they

Digitized by Google

"Paul Jones the Pirate."

From an old engraving in the collection of Mr. W. C. Crane.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

meant to have seized Lord Selkirk's person had he been at home, and to have carried him off, but all they now asked was to have the plate of the house. As there could be no thought of resistance, this was at once complied with; and having taken possession of it they walked off and reimbarked. They behaved civily, and only the officers presumed to enter the house, and happily her ladyship did not suffer from the alarm."

With this British account of this affair in mind, let the reader turn back and read the British account of the burning of Portland (then Falmouth), Maine, and so compare the American deed with that of the British.

The silver taken was of the real value. of £500, but when it was sold for the benefit of the crew Jones bought it and returned it at his own expense—at a cost of £1,000, all told—to the noble Lord. In August, 1789, years after the plate was returned, the earl was constrained to write Jones that, "notwithstanding all the precautions you took for the easy and uninterrupted conveyance of the plate," there were considerable delays; nevertheless, it arrived safely. "I intended to have put an article in the newspapers about your having returned it," he adds, but his good intentions miscarried. However, if he did not publicly acknowledge the honor of the American naval

Digitized by Google

captain who had spent $5,000 to return the plate, he privately "mentioned it to many people of fashion," so reads his letter. The British historians deliberately omit mentioning that Jones returned the silver.

After the descent upon the Isle of St. Mary's the *Ranger* still lingered on that coast. Captain Jones knew very well that many cruisers were already under orders to seek him; but they were still far away, and he must needs try conclusions with the *Drake* that he had tried to take over in the bay near Belfast.

On the morning of April 24, 1778, he hove to off the bay, and then filled and backed until well along in the afternoon. The commander of the *Drake*, seeing a stranger outside, sent a young officer in a small boat to see what she was. Captain Jones handled his ship so skilfully that her stern was kept toward the coming boat until she was directly under the *Ranger's* counter. Then the officer was induced to come on board, and not until he had climbed up the ladder and reached the deck did he know that he was on a Yankee cruiser.

Finding his officer did not return, the commander of the *Drake* got under way. Meantime signal fires had been built on every hilltop along both coasts, and the black columns of smoke were rising high in air. Moreover, a fleet of five excursion boats crowded with curi-

Digitized by Google

ous spectators was seen following the British man-of-war. But the wind was light and the tide against him, and it was not until an hour before sunset that the *Drake's* captain was able to bring his ship within fighting range of the Yankee. Finally he found himself under the lee quarter of the *Ranger* and but a pistol-shot away. There he hoisted his colors. Captain Jones at once ran up the Stars and Stripes.

"What ship is that?" said a voice on the *Drake.*

"It is the American continental ship *Ranger.* We are waiting for you. The sun is but little more than an hour from setting. It is therefore time to begin," replied Captain Jones. Then turning to the man at the wheel, Captain Jones ordered the helm hard up. The *Ranger* wore slowly around, and the *Drake* followed her motion until they were drifting broadside to broadside and yardarm to yardarm fair before the wind.

And then Captain Jones opened the battle with a broadside. The enemy replied in kind, and as fair a fight as naval annals record was begun. But after a little the fore and main topsail-yards of the *Drake* were cut in two at the masts and hung useless. The mizzen-gaff was shot away and dropped. The jib fell and dragged overboard in the water. The rigging and sails were in tatters. Worse yet, blood

Digitized by Google

was trickling from her scuppers because of the dead and wounded on her deck. Among the dead at the last was her commander, Captain Burdon, who was killed by a musket-ball through his brain. Among the wounded was the first lieutenant, and he was mortally hurt.

The flag first spread on the *Drake* was shot away, but they raised another. This, too, was shot away, and falling overboard, it dragged in the water. A little later, and just as the sun was going down behind the Irish hills, a cry for quarter was raised on the *Drake*, and the battle came to an end.

The *Ranger* in this fight had eighteen guns. The *Drake* carried twenty. The *Ranger's* crew numbered 123. The *Drake* had 151 men on her books, and, in addition to these, had taken on a number of volunteers from the shore, who had been anxious to help whip the Yankees. These raised the number of her crew to 160 by the lowest account and 190 by the highest. The *Ranger* lost two killed, including Lieutenant Wallingsford, and six wounded. The *Drake* lost forty-two killed and wounded. It is fair to say that the British account of the battle in Allen's history says the loss was but twenty-four. But Allen probably counted only those killed and wounded among the ship's regular crew and ignored the volunteers, while the Americans

Digitized by Google

counted the corpses and men under the surgeon's care.

The odds had been against him, but the honors remained with John Paul Jones.

After the battle a merchant brig happened along, and a prize crew was put on board of her. Then the fishermen who had been captured when the *Ranger* first arrived on the coast were not only released, but enough gold was given them to pay for all their losses, together with a sail from the *Drake's* outfit as a notice to the shore people that the Yankee had won. They went away cheering the generosity of John Paul Jones.

And while speaking of the generosity of this American naval captain, it should be told that, in fitting out the *Ranger* on the American side, he advanced to the American government several thousand dollars (continental currency) of his own money, and that he bore all the expense of fitting and refitting her on the French coasts before her cruise. In all, he spent some £1,500 sterling of his own money, and because of the poverty of the American government he had to wait a long time to get it back again.

It was very well written of this cruise that "the news of the brilliant achievements of Paul Jones electrified France and appalled England."

Digitized by Google

Just how much England was appalled by the American demonstrations on her coast may be inferred from a statement of the number of men "raised" (*i.e.*, gathered in by press gangs) for her navy. In 1774 she "raised" 345 men. In 1777 she "raised" 37,458, and in 1778 the number was 41,847.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST SUBMARINE WARSHIP

IT WAS SMALL AND INEFFECTIVE, BUT IT CONTAINED THE GERM OF A MIGHTY POWER THAT IS AS YET UNDEVELOPED—WHEN NICHOLAS BIDDLE DIED—HE WAS A MAN OF THE SPIRIT OF AN IDEAL AMERICAN NAVAL OFFICER—FOUGHT HIS SHIP AGAINST OVERWHELMING ODDS TILL BLOWN OUT OF THE WATER—THE LOSS OF THE *HANCOCK*—AN AMERICAN CAPTAIN DISMISSED FOR A GOOD REASON—CAPTAIN RATHBURNE AT NEW PROVIDENCE—LOSS OF THE *VIRGINIA*—CAPTAIN BARRY'S NOTABLE EXPLOIT—WITH TWENTY-SEVEN MEN TO HELP HIM, HE CAPTURED A SCHOONER OF TEN GUNS BY BOARDING FROM SMALL BOATS IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, ALTHOUGH THE SCHOONER WAS MANNED BY 116 SAILORS AND SOLDIERS.

ONE of the most striking features of the American naval service during the war of the Revolution was its irregularity. There was a navy continuously in existence, but the services rendered by individual men and ships were extremely irregular. It has already been told how John Paul Jones, after his successful cruise to the Cape Breton waters, had to remain idle for many months. After his famous cruise in the *Ranger* he was again idle until the king of France furnished him a ship. Captain Gustavus Connyngham, who gained such

Digitized by Google

a reputation in the *Surprise* and the *Revenge* on the British coasts, was actually obliged to seek service in a privateer, after his return to port, for lack of other employment. Jones had an excellent offer to do this also, but he refused on the ground that he was not fighting for money, but for the "Honour of the American flag." If men like Jones and Connyngham were left to shift for themselves, and without pay at that, it follows that others were treated in like manner.

The cause of this condition of affairs is readily found by the student in the method of caring for the navy adopted by the Congress. It was a method in keeping with a deal of the work done then. First, there was a Marine Committee of the Congress to buy ships and send them on a single "cruise eastward." Later, there was a Marine Board, part congressmen and part plain citizens, "but no two of whom shall be from the same State." There was a "Continental Naval Board." There was a "Board of Admiralty." There were naval agents. The powers and duties of all these were changed so often that no one can follow them in less space than a large volume, and a more wearying volume than that would be is difficult to imagine. There was, in short, an utter lack of system in naval affairs throughout the whole Revolution. Worse

Digitized by Google

yet, the Congress was as lacking in funds as in system.

The first result of this state of affairs was to prevent the development of an *esprit de corps* among the officers. As already told, Capt. Thomas Thompson of the *Raleigh* ran away and left the *Alfred* to her fate when the *Ariadne* and *Ceres* overhauled her. When John Paul Jones was towing the *Drake* into Brest he saw a sail, and left the *Drake* for a time to examine the stranger. While he was away the American officer in the *Drake* tried to carry her off to another port, hoping to get her fitted out and sent on a cruise with himself in command, independent of Captain Jones. The list of offences of this class—the clashing of officers where they would in this day stand shoulder to shoulder—is distressingly long.

Another very serious result of the mismanagement was in the effect on the common sailors. It was very difficult to get men for the national ships, because the life on the privateers was more to their liking, and the chances of getting prize money very much greater.

And all this is worth relating because the men of the navy won glory and were indispensable to the ultimate victory of a growing nation, in spite of it. The record of the naval men as a whole was as brilliant as the con-

Digitized by Google

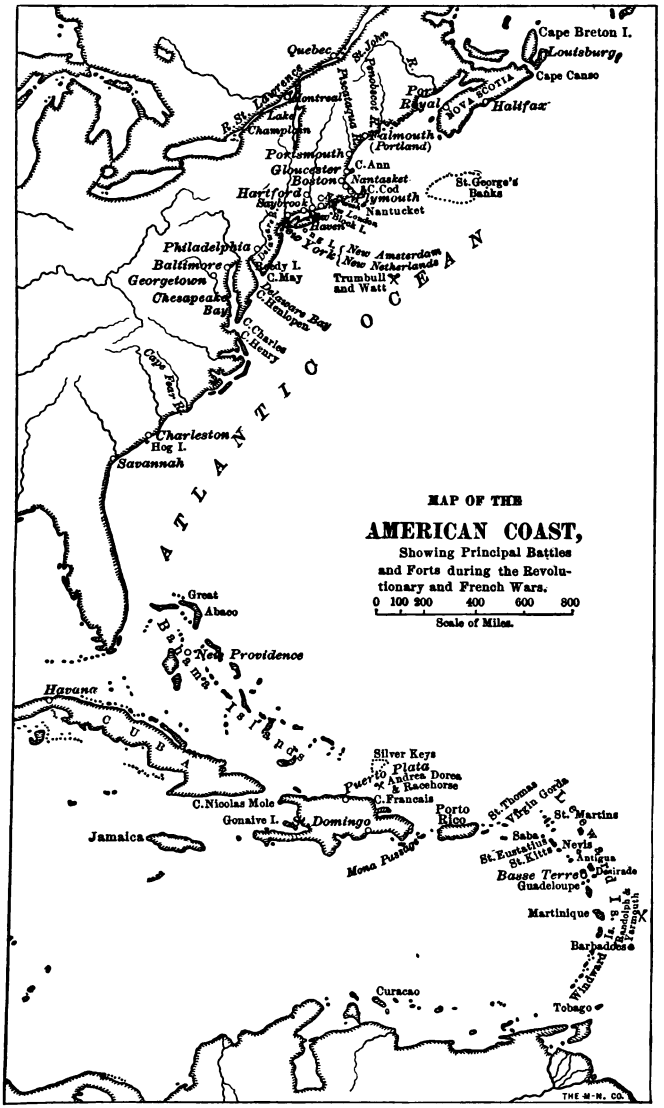
gressional management was inefficient, and that is a condition of affairs that has since been known in the navy.

To return to the American coast and give an account of the more interesting naval doings there during the time that the old flag was winning glory in Europe, it is found that considerable losses were sustained, though the story is not by any means wholly depressing.

For instance, there is the story of Capt. Nicholas Biddle. "Liberty never had a more intrepid defender" than Nicholas Biddle. It will be remembered that he was one of the original captains of the navy, and was appointed to the brig *Andrea Doria*, in which he gained reputation. So, when the first of the thirty-two-gun frigates, which Congress ordered in 1775, was completed, Captain Biddle was placed in command. She was called the *Randolph*, and she sailed from Philadelphia in February, 1777. Off Hatteras she sprung her masts in a gale, and put into Charleston for repairs. Then she sailed again, and within a week brought in six prizes, including a twenty-gun ship called the *True Briton*. Unfortunately, a blockading squadron appeared off Charleston at this time, and until March, 1778, he was held there.

Meantime, however, his success had fired the hearts of the South Carolinians, and while

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

he was there he had the satisfaction of seeing them fit out four State cruisers carrying, all told, sixty-four guns. This work completed, Captain Biddle, with the State fleet as consorts, sailed out to look for the blockading squadron, but it had sailed away.

So Captain Biddle took his little squadron down along the Caribbean coasts. Here, east of the Barbadoes, they happened to fall in with the British ship-of-the-line *Yarmouth*, Captain Vincent.

To properly understand what followed, it must be known that a ship-of-the-line was built of such heavy timbers that nothing smaller than a twelve-pounder could seriously damage its hull. The only guns in Biddle's squadron that could hope to penetrate her hull were Biddle's own, and his ship had but thirty-two guns to the *Yarmouth's* sixty-four, and they were smaller at that; so Captain Biddle signalled the State cruisers to run for it while he, in spite of the vast superiority of the enemy, sailed boldly up to her, broadside to broadside.

Better yet, for one full hour he was able to maintain the contest with his thirty-two small guns against sixty-four large ones. He was wounded, but he refused to allow his men to carry him below, and while he was thus directing the battle from the quarter-deck, the powder in the *Randolph's* magazine was in some

Digitized by Google

way fired, and the ship was literally blown out of the water. Pieces of the wreck, in flames, fell on the *Yarmouth*, while an American ensign, rolled up ready to be sent aloft, in case the one flying should be shot away, fell, unsinged, upon her forecastle.

It was at 10 o'clock on the morning of March 7, 1778, that this disaster occurred. The *Randolph* had on board 315 men at the time. The people of the *Yarmouth* supposed that all hands had perished, and made sail after the rest of the Yankee squadron, though without success. On March 12th the *Yarmouth* happened back over the very water where the fight had taken place, and there found a piece of the *Randolph* floating about with four seamen upon it, who were, of course, picked up. Captain Vincent of the *Yarmouth* reported five men killed and twelve wounded.

The little brig *Cabot*, of fourteen guns, that made such a brave fight in the first cruise of the first squadron, came to grief on the coast of Nova Scotia. She was in command of Capt. Joseph Olney. The British frigate *Milford*, with which John Paul Jones had had so much fun, happened along, and as the *Cabot* was even slower than she, Captain Olney ran her ashore to keep her from the enemy. The crew barely had time to get ashore, but they

Digitized by Google

fired the *Cabot* before leaving. Once on shore, they were, of course, afoot and friendless in the enemy's country, but Captain Olney and his men captured a schooner and returned home in her.

This occurred in March, 1777. On April 9th, following, Capt. Dudley Saltonstall, in the *Trumbull* of twenty-eight guns, captured two British transports off New York harbor that were laden with military stores for the British army, and so more than retrieved the loss of the *Cabot*. The *Trumbull* lost seven killed and eight wounded. The only record of the loss on the transports says that "the enemy suffered severely."

The year 1777 was noted for the building of the first American submarine torpedo boat. David Bushnell, of Saybrook, Connecticut (he moved to Peekskill, New York, later), a most ingenious mechanical engineer, devised a turtle-shaped cask large enough to hold a man and carry a torpedo containing 150 pounds of powder, with mechanism to fasten it to the wooden bottom of a ship and to fire it when so fastened. Because this was the first attempt to use a submarine vessel for the purposes of war, and because Bushnell's invention, fearsome as it was, is not even yet developed to anything like the degree of which it is capable, the description which he wrote of the thing is well worth giving in full, as follows:

Digitized by Google

"GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND CONSTRUCTION OF A SUBMARINE VESSEL, COMMUNICATED BY DAVID BUSHNELL, OF CONNECTICUT, THE INVENTOR, A LETTER OF OCTOBER, 1787, TO THOMAS JEFFERSON, THEN MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES AT PARIS.

"The external shape of the submarine vessel bore some resemblance to two upper tortoise shells of equal size, joined together; the flue of entrance into the vessel being represented by the openings made by the swells of the shells at the head of the animal. The inside was capable of containing the operator, and air sufficient to support him thirty minutes, without receiving fresh air. At the bottom opposite to the entrance was fixed a quantity of lead for ballast; at one edge, which was directly before the operator, who sat upright, was an oar for rowing forward or backward; at the other edge was a rudder for steering. An aperture, at the bottom, with its valve, was designed to admit water for the purpose of descending, and two brass forcing-pumps served to eject the water within, when necessary for ascending. At the top there was likewise an oar, for ascending or descending, or continuing at any particular depth. A water-gauge or barometer determined the depth of descent; a compass directed the course, and a ventilator within supplied the vessel with fresh air, when on the surface. The entrance

Digitized by Google

into the vessel was elliptical, and so small as barely to admit one person. This entrance was surrounded by a broad elliptical iron band, the lower edge of which was let into the wood whereof the body of the vessel was made, in such a manner as to give its utmost support to the body of the vessel against the pressure of the water. Above the upper edge of this iron band there was a brass crown or cover, resembling a hat with its crown and brim, which shut water-tight upon the iron band. The crown was hung to the iron band with hinges, so as to turn over sideways when opened. To make it perfectly secure when shut, it might be screwed down upon the band by the operator, or by a person without.

"There were in the brass crown three round doors, one directly in front and one on each side, large enough to put the hand through. When open they admitted fresh air. Their shutters were ground perfectly tight into their places with emery, and were hung with hinges and secured in their places when shut. There were likewise several glass windows in the crown for looking through and for admitting light in the daytime, with covers to secure them. There were two air-pipes in the crown; a ventilator which drew fresh air through one of the air-pipes, and discharged it into the lower part of the vessel.

Digitized by Google

"The fresh air introduced by the ventilator expelled the impure air through the other pipe. Both air-pipes were so constructed that they shut themselves, whenever the water rose near their tops, so that no water could enter through them. They opened themselves immediately after they rose above the water. The vessel was chiefly ballasted with lead fixed to its bottom. When this was not sufficient, a quantity was placed within, more or less, according to the weight of the operator. Its ballast rendered it so solid that there was no danger of its oversetting. The vessel, with all its appendages and the operator, was of sufficient weight to settle it low in the water. About two hundred pounds of the lead at the bottom for ballast, could be let down forty or fifty feet below the vessel. This enabled the operator to rise instantly to the surface of the water in case of accident.

"When the operator desired to descend, he placed his foot upon the top of a brass valve, depressing it, by which he opened a large aperture in the bottom of the vessel, through which the water entered at his pleasure. When he had admitted a sufficient quantity, he descended very gradually. If he admitted too large a quantity, in order to obtain an equilibrium, he ejected as much as was necessary by the two brass forcing-pumps which

Digitized by Google

were placed at each end. Whenever the vessel leaked, or he desired to ascend to the surface, he also made use of these forcing-pumps. When the skilful operator had obtained an equilibrium, he could row upward or downward, or continue at any particular depth, with an oar placed near the top of the vessel, formed upon the principle of the screw, the axis of the oar entering the vessel. By turning the oar in one direction he raised the vessel, by turning it the other way he depressed it. A glass tube, eighteen inches long and one inch in diameter, standing upright, its upper end closed, and its lower end, which was open, screwed into a brass pipe, through which the external water had a passage into the glass tube, served as a water-gauge or barometer.

"There was a piece of cork, with phosphorus on it, put into the water-gauge, condensing the air within, and bearing the cork on its surface. By the light of the phosphorus, the ascent of the water in the gauge was rendered visible, and the depth of the vessel ascertained by a graduated scale.

"An oar formed on the principle of the screw was fixed in the fore part of the vessel; its axis entered the vessel, and, being turned in one direction, rowed the vessel forward; but being turned in the other, rowed back-

Digitized by Google

ward. It was constructed to be turned by the hand or foot.

"A rudder to the hinder part of the vessel, which commanded it with the greatest ease, was made very elastic, and might be used for rowing forward. The tiller was within the vessel, at the operator's right hand, fixed at a right angle on an iron rod which passed through the vessel.

"A compass marked with phosphorus directed the course above and under water.

"The internal shape of the vessel, in every possible section of it, verged toward an ellipsis, as near as the design would allow; but every horizontal section, although elliptical, was yet as near to a circle as could be admitted.

"The body of the vessel was made exceedingly strong; a firm piece of wood was framed parallel to the conjugate diameter, to prevent the sides from yielding to the great pressure of the incumbent water in a deep immersion. This piece of wood was also a seat for the operator.

"Every opening was well secured. The pumps had two sets of valves. The aperture at the bottom for admitting water was covered with a plate perforated full of holes, to receive the water and prevent anything from closing the passage or stopping the valve

Digitized by Google

from shutting. The brass valve might likewise be forced into its place with a screw. The air-pipes had a kind of hollow sphere fixed round the top of each, to secure the air-pipe valves from injury. These hollow spheres were perforated full of holes for the passage of air through the pipes; within the air-pipes were shutters to secure them, should any accident happen to the pipes or the valves on their tops. All the joints were exactly made, and were water-tight.

"Particular attention was given to bring every part necessary to performing the operation, both within and without the vessel, before the operator, so that everything might be found in the dark. Nothing required the operator to turn to the right hand or the left.

"DESCRIPTION OF A MAGAZINE AND ITS APPENDAGES DESIGNED TO BE CONVEYED BY THE SUBMARINE VESSEL TO THE BOTTOM OF A SHIP.

"In the fore part of the brim of the crown of the vessel was a socket, and an iron tube passing through the socket; the tube stood upright, and could slide up and down six inches. At the top of the tube was a wood-screw, fixed by means of a rod, which passed through the tube and screwed the wood-screw fast upon the top of the tube. By pushing the wood-screw up against the bottom of a

Digitized by Google

ship, and turning it at the same time, it would enter the planks. When the wood-screw was firmly fixed, it could be cast off by unscrewing the rod which fastened it upon the top of the tube.

"Behind the vessel was a place, above the rudder, for carrying a large powder magazine. This was made of two pieces of oak timber, large enough, when hollowed out, to contain an hundred and fifty pounds of powder, with the apparatus used in firing it. A rope extended from the magazine to the wood-screw above mentioned; when the wood-screw was fixed, and to be cast off from its tube, the magazine was to be cast off likewise, leaving it hanging to the wood-screw. It was lighter than water, that it might rise up against the object to which the screw and itself were fastened.

"Within the magazine was a clock, constructed to run any proposed length of time under twelve hours; when it had run out its time, it unpinioned a strong lock, resembling a gun-lock, which gave fire to the powder. This apparatus was so pinioned that it could not possibly move till, by casting off the magazine from the vessel, it was set in motion.

"The skilful operator could swim so low on the surface as to approach very near a ship in the night without fear of being discovered,

Digitized by Google

and might, if he chose, approach the stem or stern with very little danger. He could sink very quickly, keep at any necessary depth, and row a great distance in any direction he desired without coming to the surface. When he rose to the surface he could soon obtain a fresh supply of air, and, if necessary, he might then descend again and pursue his course.

"EXPERIMENTS MADE TO PROVE THE NATURE AND USE OF A SUBMARINE VESSEL.

"The first experiment I made was with about two ounces of powder, which I exploded four feet under water, to prove to some of the first personages in Connecticut that powder would take fire under water.

"The second experiment was made with two pounds of powder, enclosed in a wooden bottle, and fired under a hogshead, with a two-inch oak plank between the hogshead and the powder; the hogshead was loaded with stones, as deep as it could swim. A wooden pipe, descending through the lower head of the hogshead and through the plank into the powder contained in the bottle, was primed with powder. A match put to the priming exploded the powder with a great effect, rending the plank into pieces, demolishing the hogshead, and casting the stones and ruins

Digitized by Google

of the hogshead, with a body of water, many feet into the air, to the astonishment of the spectators. This experiment was likewise made for the satisfaction of the gentlemen above mentioned.

"I afterwards made many experiments of a similar nature, some with large quantities of powder.

"In the first essays with the submarine vessel, I took care to prove its strength to sustain the great pressure of the incumbent water, when sunk deep, before I trusted any person to descend much below the surface; and I never suffered any person to go under water without having a strong piece of rigging made fast to it, until I found him well acquainted with the operations necessary for his safety. After that I made him descend and continue at particular depths without rising or sinking; row by the compass; approach a vessel; go under her, and fix the wood-screw into her bottom, etc., until I thought him sufficiently expert to put my design into execution. I found, agreeably to my expectations, that it required many trials to make a person of common ingenuity a skilful operator. The first I employed was very ingenious, and made himself master of the business, but was taken sick in the campaign of 1776, at New York, before he had an opportunity to

Digitized by Google

make use of his skill, and never recovered his health sufficiently afterwards.

"After various attempts to find an operator to my wish, I sent one who appeared more expert than the rest from New York, to a fifty-gun ship, lying near Governor's Island. He went under the ship and attempted to fasten the wood-screw into her bottom, but struck, as he supposes, a bar of iron. Not being well skilled in the management of the vessel, in attempting to move to another place, he lost the ship, and after seeking her in vain for some time he rowed some distance and rose to the surface of the water, but found day-light had advanced so far, that he durst not renew the attempt. On his return from the ship to New York, he passed near Governor's Island, and thought he was discovered by the enemy; he cast off the magazine, as he imagined it retarded him in the swell, which was very considerable.

"After it had been cast off one hour, the time the internal apparatus was set to run, it blew up with great violence.

"Afterwards, there were two attempts made in Hudson's River, above the city, but they effected nothing. Soon after this the enemy went up the river, and pursued the vessel which had the submarine boat on board, and sunk it with their shot. Though I afterwards

Digitized by Google

recovered the vessel, I found it impossible to prosecute the design any further. I had been in a bad state of health from the beginning of my undertaking, and was now very ill. The situation of public affairs was such, that I despaired of obtaining the public attention and assistance necessary. I therefore gave over the pursuit for that time and waited for a more favorable opportunity, which never arrived.

"In the year 1777, I made an attempt from a whale-boat against the *Cerberus* frigate, then lying at anchor between Connecticut River and New London, by throwing a machine against her side by means of a line. The machine was loaded with powder to be exploded by a gun-lock, which was to be unpinioned by an apparatus, to be turned by being brought alongside of the frigate. This machine fell in with a schooner at anchor, astern of the frigate, and concealed from my sight. By some means or other it was fired, and demolished the schooner and three men, and blew the only one left alive overboard, who was taken up very much hurt.

"After this, I fixed several kegs under water charged with powder, to explode upon touching anything as they floated along with the tide. I set them afloat in the Delaware, above the English shipping at Philadelphia, in

Digitized by Google

December, 1777. I was unacquainted with the river and obliged to depend upon a gentleman very imperfectly acquainted with that part of it, as I afterwards found. We went as near the shipping as we durst venture. I believe the darkness of the night greatly deceived him, as it did me. We set them adrift, to fall with the ebb upon the shipping. Had we been within sixty rods, I believe they must have fallen in with them immediately, as I designed; but as I afterwards found, they were set adrift much too far distant, and did not arrive until after being detained some time by the frost; they advanced in the daytime in a dispersed situation and under great disadvantages.

"One of them blew up a boat with several persons in it, who imprudently handled it too freely, and thus gave the British that alarm which brought on the 'Battle of the Kegs.' The above vessel, magazine, etc., were projected in the year 1771, but not completed until the year 1775.

"D. BUSHNELL."

The man who handled the submarine boat in New York harbor was Sergeant Ezra Lee, and the ship mentioned was the sixty-four-gun liner *Eagle*. It is a great pity that a full record of Bushnell's experiments and of the experi-

Digitized by Google

ences of Sergeant Ezra Lee, who handled the strange craft, was not made for the benefit of subsequent inventors, because much useless labor would have been saved. For instance, every inventor who has since worked on the idea has had to learn for himself that it is utterly impossible to see through the water after he has been once submerged, while other matters of little less importance have been worked out over and again.

The attack on the *Cerberus* mentioned above was described by the British captain as follows:

"Wednesday night, being at anchor to the westward of New London, in Black Point Bay, the schooner I had taken, at anchor close by me, astern, about eleven o'clock at night, we discovered a line towing astern that came from the bows; we immediately conjectured that it was somebody that had veered himself away by it, and began to haul in; we then found that the schooner had got hold of it (who had taken it for a fishing line), gathered it near fifteen fathom, which was buoyed up by little bits of sticks at stated distances, until he came to the end, at which was fastened a machine, which was too heavy for one man to haul up, being upwards of 100 cwt.; the other people of the boat turning out, assisted him, got it upon deck, and were unfortunately examining

Digitized by Google

it too curiously, when it went off like the sound of a gun, blew the boat to pieces, and set her in a flame, killed the three men that were in the stern; the fourth, who was standing forward, was blown into the water; I hoisted out the boat, and picked him up much hurt; as soon as he could recollect himself, he gave me the following description, as near as he could remember. It was two vessels shaped like a boat, about twenty inches long, and a foot broad, secured to each other at the distance of four feet, by two iron bars, one at each end, and an iron tube or gun-barrel in the centre, which was loose (as he had himself turned it round with his hand); they swam one over the other, the upper one keel upwards; the lower swam properly, but was so under water as just to keep the upper one a few inches above the surface; to the after iron bar hung a flat board, to which was fixed a wheel about six inches in diameter, and communicated itself to one on the upper side of the boat, of a lesser diameter; opposite to these was another wheel, on the flat of the under one or loaded vessel, which had likewise communication with the wheels of the upper boat; it was covered with lead, and the keel heavily loaded in order to keep it down in the water.

"The fatal curiosity of the seamen (who

Digitized by Google

unfortunately had been bred in working in iron) set this wheel agoing, which it did with great ease backwards and forwards, and during their looking at it, which was about five minutes from the time of its being first put in motion, it burst. Upon examining round the ship after this accident, we found the other part of the line on the larboard side buoyed up in the same manner, which I ordered to be cut away immediately for fear of hauling up another machine, which I concluded was fast at the end, and might burst when near the ship.

"The mode these villains must have taken to have swiftered the ship, must have been to have rowed off in the stream a considerable distance ahead of the ship, leaving one of their infernals in shore, and floating the other at the distance of the line, which, from the quantity that we have got on board (near 70 fathoms), and what the man tells me they saved in the schooner, which was upwards of 150 fathoms more, must have been near 300 fathom; they at the length of this line put the other in the water, and left it for the tide to float down, which in this place runs very strong.

"As the ingenuity of these people is singular in their secret modes of mischief, and as I presume this is their first essay, I have thought it indispensably my duty to return and give

Digitized by Google

you the earliest information of the circumstances, to prevent the like fatal accident happening to any of the advanced ships that may possibly be swiftered in the same manner, and to forbid all seamen from attempting hauling the line, or bringing the vessel near the ship, as it is filled with that kind of combustible that burns though in the water.

"I am, sir, etc.,

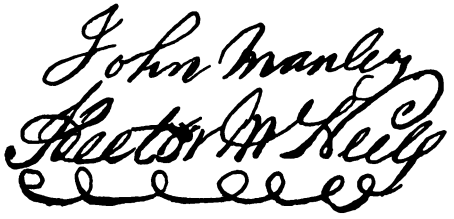
"J. SYMONS."

David Bushnell was born in Saybrook (now Westbrook), Connecticut, in the year 1742. He entered Yale College in 1771, and graduated in 1775. During his collegiate career he turned his attention to submarine warfare, and after leaving college devoted his time and patrimony entirely to the subject. He was noted for his studious habits, great inventive genius, and eccentricity. The unfortunate issue of his projects rendered him very dejected. Disappointed by his failures and the neglect of the government, he went to France at the close of the war, where he remained for a number of years, when he returned and settled in Georgia, under the assumed name of Dr. Bush, desiring thus to conceal his identity and connection with the early efforts of his life. There he was placed at the head of one of the most respectable schools in the State,

Digitized by Google

but subsequently engaged in the practice of medicine, by which he amassed a considerable fortune. He was much beloved and respected by all who knew him, and died at the age of ninety years, in the year 1826. By his will his proper name became known; his executors were required to make inquiries in the town of Saybrook for persons of the blood and family of Bushnell, and whoever in the opinion of the executors was found to be most worthy, on the score of moral worth, should be regarded as the sole legatee. But should none of the kindred be found to fulfil the condition set forth in the will, the estate was to be transferred to Franklin College, Georgia. Legatees were found in Connecticut.

The loss of the American frigate *Hancock* of thirty-two guns followed the capture of the two valuable transports off New York. Itwas in May that the *Hancock*, under Capt. John Manly (he who in the Massachusetts schooner *Lee* worked such havoc on the British store-ships off Boston in 1775), sailed from Boston



Signatures of John Manly and Hector McNeil.

Digitized by Google

on a cruise, having in company the *Boston* of twenty-four guns under Capt. Hector McNeil. When four days out they overhauled a strange sail, and Captain Manly, after a bit of veering to and fro to determine the enemy's speed and power, gave him a broadside. At this the stranger tried to run for it, and with stern chasers strove to disable the *Hancock's* rigging. But the *Hancock* was then one of the swiftest American ships, and Captain Manly held his fire until alongside, when he gave him a broadside.

Although manifestly of inferior strength, the enemy fought back bravely for an hour, and then, the *Boston* having arrived within range, he struck his colors. It proved to be the frigate *Fox* of twenty-eight guns, Captain Fotheringham. The *Hancock* lost eight in killed and wounded, and the *Fox* thirty-two.

Having placed a prize crew on the *Fox*, Captain Manly made the mistake of sailing too close to Halifax, the principal British naval station in America. Here, on June 1st, he fell in with three British ships, the *Rainbow* of forty-four guns, commanded by Sir George Collier; the frigate *Flora* of thirty-two guns, and the sloop-of-war *Victor* of eighteen guns.

When the enemy was discovered the *Boston* was well out to sea, and having the weather gauge, she down with her helm and sailed

Digitized by Google

Dear Sir Ports^m Satu^d July 19th
1777

I Congratulate you on your safe arrival in ~~the~~ could wish it had been nearer to Portsmouth. am sorry to hear your prize is retaken, and manly like to share the same fate that is the present accompt hope not true

My present purpose of sending to you is to acquaint you with the situation of the Raleigh and to know yours also, prehaps something for the good of the service might be don when those things are Explaind — we are down below in the Harbour 150 men. Guns and stores of all kinds will be Compleat in 4 or 5 days nothing but men will hinder us sailing sunday week — the Alfred, I expect from Boston this day she is to Joyn me on a Cruize being all man and fit for sea — Should any ships attempt to Block you in we being well acquainted with the Circumstances ~~fr~~ might prevent it — or perhaps you

[Over]

Facsimile of a Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Captain McNeil.

Digitized by Google

you might wish to Joyne us at Portsm^a
when you know our situation. If I dont
get People. belive Could get volenteers for
any short Expedition. Shall expect you
give me your Oppinion Explicitly
and what you Intend — if we meet the
Continental Signals will be Observd betwen
Both — Jones is here Commands the ship
Ranger built in this place, late Koch — not in
Condition for sea yet — If you Can engage moe
men then you want should be glad of them

I am dear Sir
Your Hb Servt
Thos Thompson

P S
Mrs McNeal & Famely is well —
A Flag from Halifax now in Portsm^a see the Fox brought in

away. The *Hancock* and the *Fox* were close in shore, and they were soon hard pressed. Manly, seeing himself deserted, at once began throwing overboard all unnecessary weights,

Digitized by Google

and so lightened his ship that he was in a fair way to escape, when the wind failed him, although the enemy still held enough to draw within easy range and in a position to rake. He was thus under the guns of the *Rainbow* of forty-four guns and the *Victor* of twenty, and could not turn his ship in any direction. Of course he surrendered.

Meantime the *Flora* had recaptured the *Fox*, although the prize crew, few as they were in number, made a good fight.

It was the belief of Captain Manly that had the *Boston* come down to engage the *Flora* and so pitched the *Victor* against the *Fox*, he would have been able to account for the *Rainbow*, and when the affair came before Congress Captain Manly's view prevailed, and Captain McNeil was dismissed from the service for running away.

On the theory that ships are sent to sea to fight to the last gasp, the fate of Captain McNeil was merited, even though one prominent naval historian tries to justify his conduct. Had a Biddle or a John Paul Jones had the *Boston*, one can well believe that the whole British squadron would have been carried into port.

As for Manly, it must be told that, in spite of the record he had made when he was in the service of Massachusetts—a record that had

Digitized by Google

induced Congress to put him third on the list of captains when it made its first revision of the list—he was permitted to leave the navy for the privateer service after he was exchanged and returned to port.

The naval record for 1778 opens in January, when, on the 27th, in the *Providence*, armed with twelve four-pounders, Capt. John P. Rathburne descended on New Providence island in the Bahamas. He landed at 11 o'clock at night with twenty-five men (half of his crew) and released thirty odd American prisoners confined on shore. Then he captured Fort Nassau with its cannon and ammunition and 300 stand of muskets. At daylight he captured, without a fight, an armed vessel of sixteen guns, together with five merchantmen and another fort A British sloop-of-war (ship) having appeared off the port, she was fired on from the shore, when she made haste to sail away.

After holding the place two days and getting all the portable munitions of war on board and spiking the cannon, Captain Rathburne burned two of the prizes and carried four home.

The loss of one of the new American frigates which the Congress had ordered, the *Virginia*, of twenty-eight guns, followed. She was coming down Chesapeake Bay and grounded at night. In the morning two British warships

Digitized by Google

A Typical Nassau Fort—Fort Fincastle.
From a photograph by Rau.

were seen near by, and her commander, Capt. James Nicholson, with his crew, took to the boats and escaped ashore. The congressional inquiry that followed cleared Nicholson of blame. It is said that he went ashore not to escape a fight, but because of very important papers he was carrying.

Digitized by Google

The next exploit of note was that of Capt. John Barry, who, while in command of the brig *Lexington*, had had an honorable career. It will be remembered that the command of the *Effingham*, then building in the Delaware, was given to him and that the British captured Philadelphia before the ship could get away to sea. To keep the ship out of the British hands she was moved up the river to White Hill, New Jersey, and by order of Mr. Hopkinson of the Navy Board was sunk. Barry and Hopkinson had a very loud dispute over the sinking of the *Effingham*, for Barry was confident that, with the ten guns already on board and the thirteen guns on the frigate *Washington* that was in company with her, a good fight could be made against any of the force the British were able to send. Hopkinson became personal in his remarks, and Barry's Irish blood got hot, and some things not quite courteous were said in return; but Barry, to his great disgust, had to sink the ship, and afterwards, on the order of Congress, withdraw the offensive remarks, although time had proved him entirely right in the matter of sinking the ship.

However, while charges were pending against him in this matter, he led a boat expedition down the river, carrying four row-boats manned by twenty-seven men, all told,

Digitized by Google

past the British ships and soldiers at Philadelphia, and arrived safely off Port Penn, which was then in the hands of the Americans. On the opposite side of the river lay two ships, the *Mermaid* and the *Kitty*, with two others not named, laden under convoy of the large schooner *Alert* armed with ten guns. The ships were loaded with food supplies for the British at Philadelphia.

The run past Philadelphia had been made at night, of course, and so Port Penn was reached in broad daylight. But in spite of the fact that the British were already astir and the Americans in plain view, Barry with his gallant band made a dash at the schooner, and before the British could rally for a defence clambered over the rail, cutlass in hand.

At that the British dropped everything and fled below, leaving Barry to put on the hatches and keep them there. In view of the many occasions on which the British historians charge the American sailors with cowardice it must be told here that this "wild Irishman" with his twenty-seven men beat down under the hatches one major, two captains, three lieutenants, ten soldiers, and 100 seamen and marines—he captured 116 armed men with just twenty-seven.

When he had secured them he stripped and burned the transports, and carried the

Digitized by Google

schooner over to Port Penn. This was on February 26, 1778.

The British sent a frigate and a sloop-of-war down the river to recapture the schooner, and so, finding he could not get her away to sea, Barry was obliged to destroy the vessel, which he did by pointing his guns down her hatch and shooting holes through her bottom. But he had in the meantime for two months patrolled the lower Delaware and cut off the British supplies to such an extent that there was actual suffering in the British camp. He gave them a taste, at least, of what Washington's brave hosts were suffering that winter at Valley Forge. He returned to White Hill by travelling through the forest that then surrounded Philadelphia.

Having by this effort once more commanded the attention of the authorities, he was sent to the *Raleigh* at Boston, and on September 25, 1778, sailed away with two merchant ships in convoy. Three days later he was a wanderer in the unbroken forests of Maine.

The little fleet got to sea early in the morning. At noon two sails were seen in the south, and Captain Barry, after signalling the convoy to steer close-hauled, ran down for a look at the strangers. Because the wind was light it took him the whole of the afternoon to learn their character, but at sundown he found they were

Digitized by Google

two English frigates. At this Captain Barry ordered the merchantmen back to port, cleared his ship for action, and thereafter for forty-eight hours engaged in a game of hide-and-seek with the enemy wherein he had, now and again, the darkness of night, the horizon, and sundry fog-banks to conceal him.

An English Frigate of Forty Guns.

From an engraving by Verico.

On sending the merchantmen toward port Barry took that course himself, until the darkness wholly enveloped the enemy, when he again resumed his course. At dawn next day he found himself in a fog, and during the forenoon nothing could be seen, but at noon the fog disappeared, and then the enemy were again seen to the south on a course parallel to Barry's.

Digitized by Google

Seeing this, Barry came up close-hauled and crowded on all sail, while the enemy came on in like dress until 3 or 4 o'clock, when another fog shut them from view. Then Barry headed away eastwardly with a free wind, and ran so until daylight on the 27th, when he furled the canvas and let her drift under bare poles until 6 o'clock, while he searched the horizon for the frigates.

Having seen nothing, Captain Barry made sail, and held a course to the southeast until 9.30, when he again saw the enemy. At this he came up to the wind, tacked about, and heading away to the northwest with "a staggering breeze," the *Raleigh* made "11 knots and 2 fathoms on a dragged bowline," per hour.

That was a pace that the Englishmen could not hold, and the *Raleigh* soon dropped them behind the horizon, but at noon the *Raleigh* ran out of the streak of wind, as a sailor might say, while the enemy were still holding it.

The leader of the frigates rapidly overhauled the *Raleigh* after that, and at 4 in the afternoon the *Raleigh* tacked to the west to see what the force of the leader was. Captain Barry hoped he might make a good fight with her single-handed before the other could come up, and at 5 in the afternoon "the *Raleigh* edged away, brailing her mizzen and taking in

Digitized by Google

her staysails." Crossing the enemy's bows, the *Raleigh* dropped down abreast of him, and set the American ensign. The frigate, showing fourteen guns on a side, hoisted the king's flag, and then the *Raleigh* gave her a broadside. She replied swiftly, and at the second fire had the good fortune to carry away the *Raleigh's* foretopmast and mizzen-topgallantmast. She was now able to outsail the *Raleigh*, and so shot ahead to get clear of the too hot fire of the Yankee, and then began to fire at long range while Captain Barry was clearing away the wreck aloft. Once the wreckage was down, however, Barry bore up and strove to get alongside and board, but with her superior canvas the frigate avoided this. Meantime the other ship was coming near, and Captain Barry, finding he could not, in his crippled condition, maintain a fight with two, decided to run his ship ashore on some islands that were visible, for the fight was made off the coast of Maine.

And then night came on with a still fading breeze. The *Raleigh*, with all sail set, headed for the coast. The frigates followed, and until midnight the two ships drifted along with the red flames spurting from their sides, and the nearing cliffs echoing to the thunder of the conflict.

At 12 o'clock the enemy hauled off for a

Digitized by Google

brief interval, but the other ship having come up, the two renewed the conflict, and then the *Raleigh* grounded.

The enemy now took positions on the *Raleigh's* quarter. Captain Barry kept the four stern chasers working, but lowered his boats forward and went ashore with a lot of his men to fortify the island on which he had grounded, being determined to fire his ship and resist capture in any event. But while he was away a frightened petty officer hauled down the flag.

The *Raleigh* was eventually put into the British navy, but Captain Barry and his men on the island escaped to the mainland. The ship that made so good a fight against the *Raleigh* was the *Unicorn*, of twenty-eight guns. Her consort was the *Experiment*, of fifty. The Americans lost twenty-five killed and wounded, and the *Unicorn* ten killed and an unknown number of wounded—probably twenty-five or thirty.

On the whole, the years 1777 and 1778 were disastrous, and the record was, in a sense, to the discredit of the American navy. Two captains were, indeed, dropped from the naval list for failing to support the flag, and where they failed the record was in part only made good by the heroism of the others. Of the thirteen frigates which the Congress decided

Digitized by Google

to build in December, 1775, but four remained. Some were lost at sea, as already described, and the rest fell into the hands of the British through the operations of the land forces.

But if we compare the American forces with those of the English, the wonder is that the Americans were able to keep the flag afloat at all, for the British navy in American waters in 1778 numbered eighty-nine ships mounting 2,576 guns, while the Americans had fourteen ships mounting 332 guns. And what is of more importance, the British ships were at this time manned by crews that were disciplined, while, as already noted, the Yankee ships were to a very great extent manned by landsmen. A time was to come when, in the matter of training, the superiority was to be on the other decks, but in 1778 it was all in favor of the British.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

PRIVATEERS OF THE REVOLUTION

A TALE OF THE AMERICAN PATRIOTS WHO WENT AFLOAT OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR NAVY—THEIR PART IN DRIVING THE BRITISH FROM BOSTON—REMARKABLE WORK OF THE *LEE*—TRUXTON AS A PRIVATEER—DARING CAPT. JOHN FOSTER WILLIAMS—WHEN CAPT. DANIEL WATERS, WITH THE *THORN* OF SIXTEEN GUNS, WHIPPED TWO SHIPS THAT CARRIED THIRTY-FOUR GUNS BETWEEN THEM—GREAT WAS JOSHUA BARNEY—THE STORY OF THE MOST FAMOUS STATE CRUISERS OF THE REVOLUTION—WON AGAINST GREATER ODDS THAN WERE ENCOUNTERED BY ANY SUCCESSFUL SEA CAPTAIN OF THE WAR—BRITISH ACCOUNT OF THE WORK OF AMERICAN PRIVATEERS—THE HORRORS OF THE *JERSEY* PRISON SHIP.

GREAT as was the influence of the burning of Falmouth (Portland), Maine, in driving the Continental Congress into providing a continental navy, the whole story of the results of that infamous act has not yet been told. The "indignation against the commissioned pirates and licensed robbers" was not felt in the halls of the Congress alone. "The General Court of Massachusetts passed an act encouraging the fitting out of armed vessels," and one for "erecting a court to try and condemn all vessels that should be found infesting" the Amer-

Digitized by Google

ican coast. This act was passed on November 10th, and John Adams declared it one of the most important documents in our history.

Connecticut and Rhode Island immediately followed the example of Massachusetts, and on March 23, 1776, the Congress provided for private armed vessels under the continental flag.

Of the very early deeds of these privateers only meagre details are found recorded, but it appears that Washington, when he found the troops under his command, in the fall of 1775, were well-nigh absolutely destitute of powder, determined to supply them from the transports that were continually bringing munitions of war to the British forces in Boston and to the British ships in the harbor. Accordingly, he caused several small vessels to be armed and sent afloat in Massachusetts Bay and along shore to intercept the transports. He did this without waiting for authority from the Congress, and the vessels sailed as Massachusetts cruisers.

Of the number sent, it is said that all but one proved to be manned by incapable officers or mutinous crews, which is not quite true, but the one, the schooner *Lee*, of eight small guns, Capt. John Manly, redeemed any failure of the rest by the capture of the brigantine *Nancy*, already noted. "This was an ordnance

Digitized by Google

A PROCLAMATION.

WHEREAS Congreſs have received information and complaints, "That violences have "been done by American armed veſſels to neutral nations, in ſeizing ſhips belonging to "their ſubjects and under their colours, and in making captures of thoſe of the enemy "whilſt under the protection of neutral coaſts, contrary to the uſage and cuſtom of Nations." To the end that ſuch unjuſtifiable and piratical acts, which reflect diſhonour upon the national character of theſe States, may be in future effectually prevented, the ſaid Congreſs hath thought proper to direct, enjoin and command, and they do hereby direct, enjoin and command, all Captains, Commanders and other Officers and Seamen belonging to any American armed veſſels, to govern themſelves ſtrictly in all things, agreeably to the tenor of their Commiſſions, and the Inſtructions and Reſolutions of Congreſs; particularly that they pay a ſacred regard to the rights of neutral powers, and the uſage and cuſtom of civilized nations, and on no pretence whatever preſume to take or ſeize any ſhips or veſſels belonging to the ſubjects of princes or powers in alliance with theſe United States, except they are employed in carrying contraband goods, or ſoldiers to our enemies; and in ſuch caſe that they conform to the Stipulations contained in Treaties ſubſiſting between ſuch princes or powers and theſe States; and that they do not capture, ſeize or plunder any ſhipt or veſſels of our enemies being under the protection of neutral coaſts, nations or princes, under the penalty of being condignly puniſhed therefor, and alſo of being bound to make ſatisfaction for all matters of damage, and the intereſt thereof by reparation, under the pain and obligation of their perſons and goods. And further; The ſaid Congreſs doth hereby Reſolve and Declare, That perſons wilfully offending in any of the foregoing inſtances, if taken by any foreign powers in conſequence thereof, ſhall not be conſidered as having a right to claim protection from theſe States, but ſhall ſuffer ſuch puniſhment as by the uſage and cuſtom of nations may be inflicted upon ſuch offenders.

GIVEN in CONGRESS *at* YORK, *in the State of* PENNSYLVANIA, *this Ninth Day of May, Anno Domini One Thouſand Seven Hundred and Seventy-Eight.*

HENRY LAURENS, Preſident.

ATTEST. CHARLES THOMSON, Secretary.

YORK-TOWN: PRINTED BY JOHN DUNLAP.

From the copy at the Lenox Library.

ship," says Dodsley's "Annual Register," of London, for 1776. She "contained, besides a large mortar upon a new construction, sev-

Digitized by Google

eral pieces of fine brass cannon, a large quantity of small arms and ammunition, with all manner of tools, utensils, and machines necessary for camps and artillery, in the greatest abundance. The loss of this ship was much resented in England." As a matter of fact, she carried 2,000 muskets, 8,000 fusees, 31 tons of musket bullets, 3,000 solid shot for twelve-pounders, and two six-pounder cannon, besides gunpowder, etc. The mortar was of thirteen-inch calibre, and afterward exploded. She was brought into Cape Ann Roads on November 29, 1775. On December 8th the *Lee* took three more transports that were less valuable to the Americans, but the loss hurt the British rather more. For, insignificant as were the vessels captured when considered as a part of the whole fleet employed against the colonies, one need only glance at the state of affairs in Boston to understand why the loss of one ordnance ship was "resented in England," and why the taking of three other transports was a still more serious matter. Boston was cut off from the back country. All supplies had to come from over the water. "Toward the end of the season Government went to a vast expense in sending out provisions and necessaries of all sorts," says the British authority just quoted. "The want of fresh provisions had caused much sickness there.

Digitized by Google

. . . No less than 5,000 oxen, 14,000 of the largest and fattest sheep and a vast number of hogs were purchased and sent out alive." They also sent out coal and even kindling wood, not to mention vegetables. But the winds were against them. The live stock died on board before they got away from the home coasts, "so that the channel was everywhere strowed with the carcasses of these animals." The vegetables "fermented and perished." On top of all these losses the capture of even such small vessels as schooners of a hundred tons was a serious loss, for the whole British force in Boston was hungry, while houses had to be torn down to supply fuel.

To add to the mortification of the enemy, some of the captures were made within sight of British frigates which, through the failure of the wind or the action of the tide, were unable to interfere. A British account of one of these audacious attacks that in the end was frustrated will illustrate the character of the Yankee privateer.

"On the 23d of November a small fleet of transports under convoy of the frigate *Tartar* arrived off Boston, and with the exception of two safely entered the port. The ship *Hunter* and a brig, owing to a shift in the wind, were obliged to anchor outside the

Digitized by Google

harbor, which being observed by two American privateers that had been following the convoy, they in the most daring manner attacked and boarded them, setting them on fire. A signal was immediately made for the *Raven* to weigh anchor and go in chase, but Lieutenant John Bourmaster, who had been appointed to protect Boston Lighthouse, then under repair, and who was in command of an armed transport, on observing the privateers fire upon the *Hunter*, set sail and reached the transports in time to save them from destruction."

Among the little cruisers that saw the most service was the *Franklin* schooner. Under Capt. John Selman she went with the *Lynch* to the St. Lawrence River to intercept the two transports mentioned in the report of the doings of the Congress on October 5, 1775, wherein it was resolved that "a letter be sent to General Washington to inform him that Congress having received certain intelligence of the sailing of two north country built brigs, of no force, from England on the 11th of August last, loaded with arms, powder and other stores, for Quebec, without convoy, which it being of importance to intercept," etc., the general was to send two cruisers after them.

Captain Selman failed to find the brigs, but

Digitized by Google

AN ORDINANCE,

Afcertaining what Captures on Water fhall be lawful.

In purfuance of the Powers delegated by the Confederation in Cafes of Capture on Water:

Philadelphia. Printed by DAVID C. CLAYPOOLE, in Market-Street.

From the copy at the Lenox Library.

Digitized by Google

"missing them, they took ten other vessels and Governor Wright of St. John's. All these vessels were released as we had waged a ministerial war and not one against our most gracious sovereign."

They changed their tactics after their most gracious sovereign was pleased to send Hessians to crush them.

The *Franklin* was thereafter stationed in and near Massachusetts Bay, and early in the spring of 1776, under Capt. James Mugford, captured a transport having 1,500 barrels of powder in her hold, besides other war supplies.

It is recorded that Capt. Samuel Tucker, while in command of Massachusetts cruisers, captured no less than thirty vessels belonging to the enemy.

The most brilliant achievement of this mosquito fleet during 1776 was on June 17th. The Connecticut cruiser *Defence*, Captain Harding, heard a cannonading to the north of Plymouth, and cruising in that direction, met the schooner *Lee*, now under Capt. Daniel Waters, and three other privateers. They had had a running fight with two big transports that had gone into Nantasket Roads. So the Yankees determined to follow them there. At 11 o'clock at night Captain Harding ran in between the two transports and came to anchor. He was but a dozen

Digitized by Google

yards from each of them. Having everything ready, he hailed and ordered both of them to strike.

"Aye, aye—I'll strike," said a voice from one of them, and then a broadside was fired from it into the *Defence*. The *Defence* replied, but the enemy held out for an hour. When they surrendered it was found that the two contained 200 regular soldiers of the Seventy-first Regiment. Major Menzies, who had been in command, was the one to answer the hail by saying he would strike, and then firing. He was killed with seventeen others during the battle. The next morning another transport with 100 more men of the same regiment was captured.

But if this was counted daring work by the British authorities, there were other deeds to come which were unquestionably shocking to the British merchants, for, following the example set by the *Revenge* and the *Surprise* of the regular navy, the privateers went seeking prizes on the coasts and in the very harbors of Great Britain herself. In daring, these privateers quite equalled Connyngham and John Paul Jones. A British account of one of these descents says:

"An American privateer of twelve guns came into this road (Guernsey) yesterday morning, tacked about on firing of the guns

Digitized by Google

from the Castle, and just off the Island took a large brig bound for this port which they have since carried into Cherbourg. She had the impudence to send her boat in the dusk of the evening to a little island off here called Jetto and unluckily carried off the lieutenant of Worthley's Independent Company, here, with the adjutant, who were shooting rabbits for their diversion. The brig they took is valued at seven thousand pounds."

It is unfortunate that the log-books and diaries kept on most of these cruisers have disappeared, for many a stirring tale of adventure has thus been lost. Nevertheless, authentic details of some of the deeds done are by no means wanting. For instance, there was one Thomas Truxton of whom the British heard to their sorrow in after years. He was in command of the privateer *Independence*, of New York, in 1777. Going to the Azores, he captured a number of small prizes, and then had the luck to fall in with the convoy from the Windward Islands. There were frigates to protect the fleet, but Truxton cut out three big ships, of which one was armed and manned better than the *Independence*, save only for the difference in captains.

Returning to port, he fitted out the *Mars* with twenty odd guns and made a cruise in the English Channel. Here his prizes were

Digitized by Google

numerous, and it is said that those he sent into Quiberon Bay "in a great measure laid the foundation of Lord Stormonth's remonstrance to the French Court, against the admission into her ports of our armed vessels and cruisers"—a remonstrance that was not heeded, and so the French became involved in war with England to the great advantage of the colonies.

Later still, while *en route* to France in the *St. James* of twenty guns, he beat off a ship of thirty-two guns that had been sent out expressly to capture him. A good story is told of this fight. A ball had passed through her side and lodged in her mainmast. "A fine forecastle man named Jack Sutton, perceiving the ball the moment it struck the mast, seized it, ran with it to a gunner, and said: 'Here, gunner, take this shot, write post paid upon it, and send it back to the rascals.'"

Capt. John Foster Williams was another daring privateer. In 1778, in the *Hazard*, that mounted fourteen four-pounders and two three-pounders, he captured the brig *Active*, that mounted eighteen six-pounders, six smaller guns, and ten one-pounder swivels. The fight lasted forty minutes, and the *Active* lost thirty-three in killed and wounded to the *Hazard's* eight.

In May, 1779, he was placed in the twenty-

Digitized by Google

gun ship *Protector*, belonging to Massachusetts, and in June he fought the British privateer *Admiral Duff*, an equal ship, yard-arm to yard-arm, for an hour, when the enemy took fire and blew up. Only fifty-five of her crew were picked up. Returning from this cruise, he fell in with the thirty-two-gun frigate *Thames*, and after a running fire compelled her to haul off.

And then there was Capt. Alexander Murray. In the *Revenge*, of eighteen guns, in 1780, he beat off two ships of the British navy, of which one mounted eighteen and the other sixteen guns. This was at the capes of the Chesapeake. Afterwards he took a cargo of tobacco from Richmond, Virginia, in a ship that had only five six-pounders for armament. At sea he fell in with a privateer of fourteen guns and 100 men. Murray, having so few guns, shifted them across the deck as occasion required, and blazed away. His ship, owing to the superior number of guns of the enemy, was eventually so cut up aloft that only the mainmast and bowsprit remained standing; nevertheless, Captain Murray beat off the enemy in spite of four desperate attempts to carry him by boarding.

Greater still was the renown of Capt. Daniel Waters. Captain Waters was sent to sea by General Washington in the *Lee*, as

Digitized by Google

already mentioned in this chapter. In 1778, while in command of the privateer *Thorn*, of

Alexander Murray.

From an engraving by Edwin of the painting by Wood.

sixteen guns, he amply justified the confidence the general had manifested in him by his fight with two English sloops-of-war. One was the

Digitized by Google

Governor Tryon, of sixteen guns, Captain Stebbins, and the other the *Sir William Erskine*, of eighteen guns, Captain Hamilton. After two hours of such desperate fighting as was shown but rarely, the *Tryon* struck and the *Erskine* hauled off. But Captain Waters would not let the *Erskine* escape. He set more sail, overhauled her, and compelled her to strike. As night came on the *Tryon* managed to escape, but Captain Waters manned the *Erskine* and sent her in. He had but sixty men left in the *Thorn*. Nevertheless, when he fell in with the *Sparlin*, of eighteen guns and ninety-seven men, next day, he gave battle and captured her also.

If any further proof be wanted of the fact that it is the heart of the commander and not the number of his men or the weight of his metal that wins in a sea-fight, it will be found in the tale of the American privateer *Hyder Ali* and the British ship *General Monk*. Capt. Joshua Barney commanded the *Hyder Ali*, and he had had a lot of good training before he became the hero of the story now to be told. He had had (through accident) command of a ship when but seventeen years old, and acquitted himself with honor. He had sailed in the *Hornet* in the first American naval squadron. He had seen exciting service in the *Wasp* under Captain Alexander.

Digitized by Google

Joshua Barney

From an engraving by Gross after a miniature by Isabey.

Digitized by Google

He had captured a British privateer while commanding the little sloop *Sachem*. He was in the *Andrea Doria* when she fought the *Race-horse*. He had been captured while bringing in a prize, and had survived the frightful ill-treatment the prisoners on the prison ship *Jersey* received. He escaped thence, and while in command of a cargo ship, had beaten off the *Rosebud*, Captain Duncan, a ship of sixteen guns, by firing a crowbar at her, and so cutting away all her headgear and disabling her foremast.

And so the 8th of April, 1782, arrived. On that day he took command of the *Hyder Ali*, of the Pennsylvania State service, and started to convoy a fleet of merchantmen from Philadelphia out to sea. The *Hyder Ali* carried sixteen six-pounders and 110 men. At the capes the fleet found the British frigate *Quebec*, the brig *Fair American*, of sixteen guns, and the brig *General Monk*, Captain Rogers, carrying "only (*sic*) sixteen carronades, twelve-pounders, and two long six-pounders" (so says Allen). The *Quebec* could not get around the shoals, and had no part in the affray. The *Fair American* went hunting the convoy, and the *General Monk* came after the *Hyder Ali*.

As the Englishman approached, Captain Barney saw his immense superiority in men

Digitized by Google

and metal, but determined to make a fight. Calling his officers and men around him, he said:

"If I direct you to prepare for boarding you are to understand me as meaning that you are to remain at your guns, and be ready to fire the moment the word is given. If on the contrary I order you to give him a broadside, you are to consider me as calling for boarders, and to hold yourselves ready to board as soon as we gain a proper position."

A little later the Englishman ranged up within a dozen yards or less, and in a loud voice demanded that the *Hyder Ali* strike her colors.

"Hard a port your helm—do you want him to run aboard us?" bawled Captain Barney to the man at the wheel of the *Hyder Ali*.

"The ready witted seaman understood his cue and clapped his helm hard a starboard. The enemy's jib boom caught in the fore rigging of the *Hyder Ali* and there remained entangled during the short but glorious action that ensued. The *Hyder Ali* thus gained a raking position of which she availed herself to its utmost benefit. More than twenty broadsides were fired in twenty-six minutes and scarcely a shot missed its effect; entering in at the starboard bow and making their way out through the port quarter. In less than

Digitized by Google

Fight of the *Hyder Ali* with the *General Monk*, 1782.

From a painting by Crépin at the Naval Academy, Annapolis.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

half an hour from the firing of the first broadside the British flag waved its proud folds no longer in the breeze."

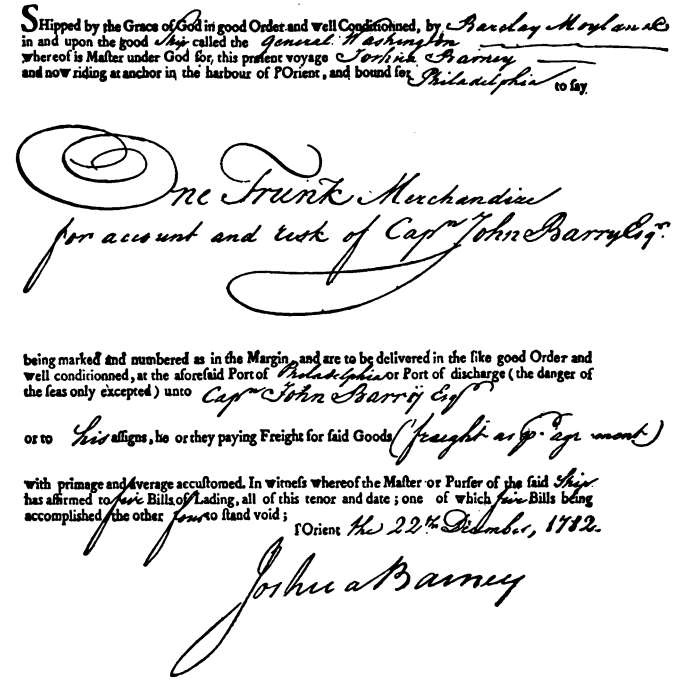
This quotation is from a "Biographical Memoir" of Barney, made from his private papers by Mary Barney. Having captured the *Monk*, Barney stood up the Delaware, drove the *Fair American* ashore, and easily escaped the frigate. A comparative statement of the forces of the combatants is worth giving. The British ship carried a crew of 136 men; the American, 110. The British ship was armed with sixteen twelve-pounders and two long sixes—she could throw 102 pounds of metal at a broadside; the American carried sixteen six-pounders—she could throw forty-eight pounds of metal at a broadside. The British had more than twice the metal and they had a much greater number of men—men, too, who had long been fighting together, while the American crew had not been on board a month.

The comparison of losses is equally significant. The *Monk* lost twenty men killed and thirty-three wounded—fifty-three out of 136. The *Hyder Ali* lost four killed and eleven wounded. The first lieutenant, purser, surgeon, boatswain, and chief gunner were among the *Monk's* killed, and her captain was severely wounded.

Digitized by Google

It is said that the *General Monk* had captured sixty American vessels in two years.

Did space permit, many other brave deeds of the privateers might be given. Of especial


Shipped by the Grace of God in good Order and well Conditionned, by Barclay Moylan & Co in and upon the good Ship called the General Washington whereof is Master under God for, this present voyage Joshua Barney and now riding at anchor in the harbour of l'Orient, and bound for Philadelphia to say

One Trunk Merchandize
for account and risk of Capt John Barry Esq.

being marked and numbered as in the Margin, and are to be delivered in the like good Order and well conditionned, at the aforesaid Port of Philadelphia or Port of discharge (the danger of the seas only excepted) unto Capt John Barry Esq

or to His assigns, he or they paying Freight for said Goods (freight as p. agreement)

with primage and Average accustomed. In witness whereof the Master or Purser of the said Ship has affirmed to four Bills of Lading, all of this tenor and date; one of which four Bills being accomplished the other four to stand void;

l'Orient the 22th December, 1782.

Joshua Barney

A Relic of Two Revolutionary Captains: Bill of Lading for John Barry Signed by Joshua Barney.

From the original at the Lenox Library.

interest, though of small moment in their immediate effect upon the war, was the work done in whaleboats along the coast and especially upon Long Island Sound. The

Digitized by Google

adventures of these brave—they were often even reckless—men lived in the tales told at the firesides long after the Revolution, and stirred the hearts that in another war were to emulate the deeds of this one, and with a success that astounded the natural enemy of the struggling young nation.

But if all the tales may not be repeated here, something may be told of what these Yankee privateers accomplished. In the following quotation from Dodsley's "Annual Register" for 1778 is found a statement made in Parliament regarding this work up to the end of 1777. It says:

"The number of vessels belonging to Great Britain and Ireland, taken by ships of war and privateers belonging to the said colonies, amount to 733.—That of that number, it appears that 47 have been released, and 127 retaken; but that the loss on the latter, for salvage, interest on the value of the cargo, and loss of a market, must have been very considerable.—That the loss of the remaining 559 vessels, which have been carried into port, appears, from the examination of merchants, to amount at least to 2,600,000 l.—That of 200 ships anually employed in the African trade, before the commencement of the present civil war, whose value, upon an average, was about 9,000 l. each, there are not now forty ships,

Digitized by Google

employed in that trade, whereby there is a diminution in this branch of comerce of 160 ships, which at 9,000 l. each, amount to a loss of 1,440,000 l. per annum.—That the price of insurance to the West Indies and North America, is increased from two, and two and a half, to five per cent with convoy ; but without convoy, and unarmed, the said insurance has been made at fifteen per cent. But generally ships in such circumstances cannot be insured at all.—That the price of a seaman's wages is raised from one pound ten shillings, to three pounds five shillings per month.—That it appears to this committee, that the present diminution of the African trade, the interruption of the American trade to the West Indies, and the captures made of the West-India ships, have greatly distressed the British colonies in the West Indies.—That the numbers of American privateers, of which authentic accounts have been received, amount to 173 ; and that they carried 2,556 guns, and at least 13,840 seamen, reckoning 80 men in each ship.—And that, of the above privateers, 34 have been taken, which carried 3,217 men, which is more than 94 men to each vessel."

To this may be added a statement from the London "Remembrancer" (vol. v), which says that "the number of English vessels employed in the West India trade, captured by Amer-

Digitized by Google

"The Howes Asleep in Philadelphia."—A Caricature Drawn forth by the Doings of Revolutionary Privateers.

(The cow represents British commerce; while the American cuts off her horns, a Hollander milks her, the Frenchman and Spaniard help themselves to the milk, the British merchant wrings his hands in despair, and the British Lion sleeps through it all. In the background are the two Howes asleep, and the *Eagle* high and dry, the rest of the fleet being nowhere visible.)

Digitized by Google

ican cruisers, amounted on the 1st February, 1777, to two hundred and fifty sail: value of their cargoes, about ten millions of dollars. In the course of one week fourteen English vessels were carried into Martinique. So overstocked was the market of this island, by these privateers, that English silk stockings, which had usually sold for two or three dollars, were disposed of for *one* dollar. Sailors went from door to door, offering their prize goods for sale; nor could they dispose of Irish linens for more than *two dollars per piece.* Other goods sold in proportion. *Of a fleet of sixty vessels, from Ireland, for the West Indies, thirty-five were captured by American privateers!*"

Still another British account of the distress occasioned by the privateers, written from Grenada, says:

"We are happy if we can get anything for money by reason of the quantity of vessels that are taken by American privateers. A fleet of vessels came from Ireland a few days ago. From sixty vessels that departed from Ireland not above twenty-five arrived in this and neighboring islands, the others, it is thought, being all taken by the American privateers. God knows if this American war continues much longer we shall all die with hunger. There was a Guineaman that came

Digitized by Google

from Africa with 450 negroes, some thousand weight of gold dust and a great many elephant teeth; the whole cargo being computed to be worth twenty thousand pounds sterling, taken by an American privateer, a brig mounting fourteen cannon, a few days ago."

The British Prison Ship *Jersey*.

From an old wood-cut.

A brief reference to the prison ship in which the privateers were confined when captured by the enemy on the American coast will serve very well to close this chapter. The reference may be brief, because it is so notorious in the annals of civilized warfare as to be known to every schoolboy. The special jail of the pri-

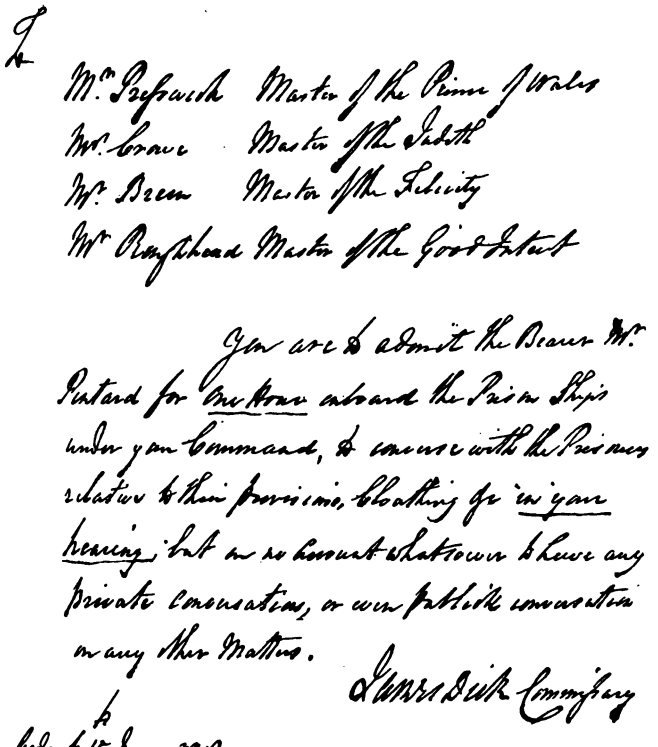
Digitized by Google

vateers was the dismantled man-o'-war hulk *Jersey*. As consorts she had four other hulks, but the *Jersey* was the receiving ship. If the unfortunates captured and taken to England were, by the deliberate and publicly debated act of Parliament, fed with an allowance of bread that was half a pound less per day than was allowed to the hated Frenchmen, one would naturally expect still worse treatment for those who were kept by jailers unrestrained by the sentiments of the humane portion of their countrymen.

The *Jersey* was at first anchored near the city of New York. She leaked constantly, and her hold, where the prisoners were confined, was damp and rotten. They had no means for cleaning themselves or the hold. The careless were herded with those who would have been careful. The damnable conditions there bred the ship-fever and other diseases. Instead of disinfecting the hulk the authorities moved it over to Wallabout Bay, where the Brooklyn Navy Yard is now located. This was done to keep the contagion from spreading to the city. Then a regiment of renegade Americans was quartered in most comfortable fashion within sight of this prison ship, and the terrors of the ship were then deliberately increased. The food of the prisoners consisted of the bread and meat that

Digitized by Google

had been ordered for the British forces, but was condemned as unfit for human beings. And the quantity was very scant at that.



A Permit to Visit One of the Prison Ships.

From the original at the Lenox Library.

The sick were placed in bunks where the snow could sift down through hatchways and in through open seams on to the one blanket

Digitized by Google

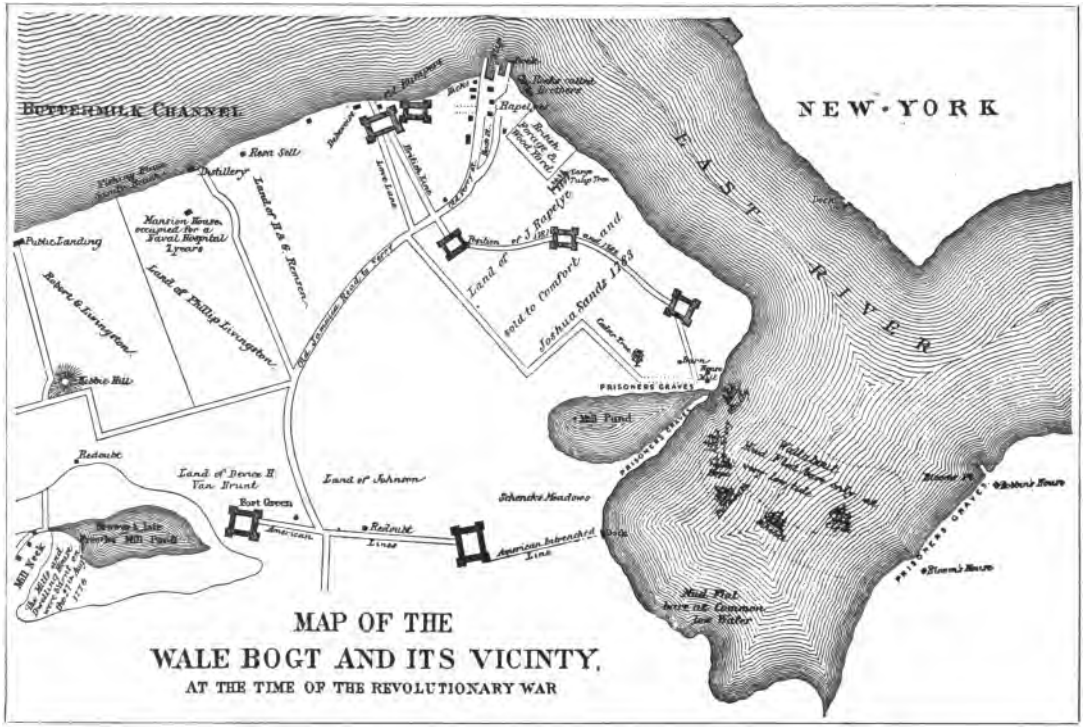
allowed for covering. To the ravages of disease were added the horrors of frozen limbs, and living men saw their own feet drop off because of this treatment.

At night the prisoners were driven to their bunks with curses and the cry of "Down, rebels, down!" In the morning they were turned out with other imprecations and the words "Rebels, turn out your dead!"

And there were dead a-plenty to turn out every day in the year. The British jailers would point to the well-kept renegades and offer to send any prisoner who would join them to enjoy the same comforts, but the love of home and of liberty was so strong in the hearts of these men that they chose death instead of such a release from prison—more than ten thousand Americans chose death by lingering torture on the British prison ships in New York rather than dishonor.

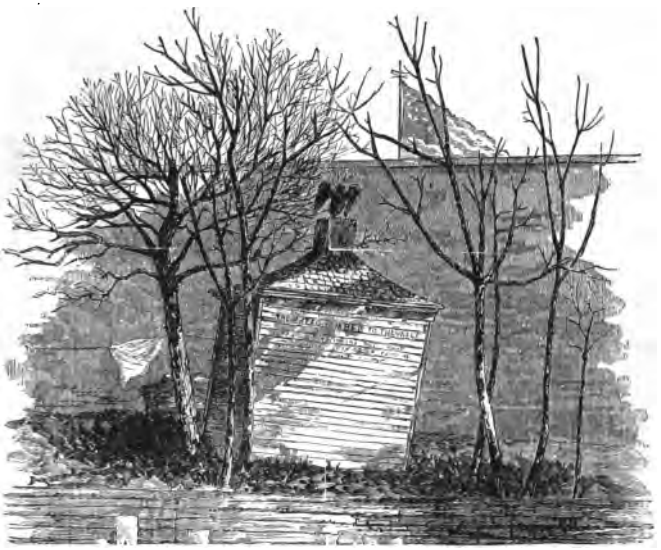
David Sproats was the chief keeper of the prison ships. He boasted that he had killed more "rebels" than all the king's armies had done. To aggravate his offences, he offered to exchange the sick and dying privateersmen in his charge for an equal number of British regulars who could pass inspection as fit for service, and because Washington refused to thus aid in recruiting the waning forces of the enemy the horrors of the prison ships were

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

increased. And because of this refusal the English writers say to this day that if any American died on the prison ship it was his own fault, or the fault of the American authorities who refused to make an exchange!



A Relic of the Prison Ships: Entrance to the Vault of the *Martyrs*.

From an old wood-cut.

If those Englishmen who wonder why it is that American schoolboys, when playing games of "war," invariably speak of the "enemy" as "the British"—if those wondering English wish to learn why this is so, let them read with candid minds the true story of the American struggle for life and liberty.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX

JOHN PAUL JONES AND THE *BONHOMME RICHARD*

A CONDEMNED INDIAMAN, ILL-SHAPED AND ROTTEN, FITTED AS A MAN-O'-WAR—A DISHEARTENING CRUISE WITH INCAPABLE AND MUTINOUS ASSOCIATES—ATTEMPT TO TAKE LEITH, AND THE SCOTCH PARSON'S PRAYER—MEETING THE *SERAPIS*—WHEN JOHN PAUL JONES HAD "NOT YET BEGUN TO FIGHT"; WHEN HE HAD "GOT HER NOW"; WHEN HE WOULD NOT "SURRENDER TO A DROP OF WATER"—READY WIT OF RICHARD DALE—WORK OF A BRIGHT MARINE—A BATTLE WON BY SHEER PLUCK AND PERSISTENCE.

THE one sea-fight of the American struggle for liberty that is of unfailing interest was that in which John Paul Jones, in the *Bonhomme Richard*, whipped the British frigate *Serapis*. And the student need not go far to seek the reason for this interest, because it is found in the fact that it was the man that won, and neither the ship nor the crew. It was won in spite of such obstacles as no other man has ever been obliged to face at sea. It was a victory typical of the ultimate success of the American cause, for it was a victory that was literally dragged out of the breakers of destruction.

Digitized by Google

John Paul Jones reached Brest, France, after his brilliant cruise in the *Ranger*, on May 8, 1778. It was not until February 4, 1779, that he was again ordered in command of a ship. The delay was due, of course, to the utter lack of funds to the account of the American commissioners in France. France, however, was at war with England, and to the French court Jones applied, time and again, but without success until after he happened to read one of Franklin's old "Almanacks" containing "Poor Richard's Maxims." Therein he read that wise saying: "If you wish to have any business done faithfully and expeditiously, go and do it yourself."

This is worth telling, first, because Jones acted on this advice, and on going to Paris was so well received that he got a ship. It is also worth telling because the maxim made such a deep impression on Jones that, having been placed in command of a ship, he changed her name to "Poor Richard," which, when translated into French, is *Bonhomme Richard.* That the *Bonhomme Richard* will float in history so long as a record of sails exists scarce need be said.

A most remarkable vessel was this that was transferred to the use of the American commander. On reaching L'Orient, where she was lying, he found her a huge, wall-sided

Digitized by Google

merchantman that had ended her usefulness as an India trader, and was now to be transferred to another use, just as worn-out ships in these days become coal barges in the Atlantic coasting trade. She had an enormously high poop and an enormously high forecastle. Her masts were short, her sails were squat, and her bows and stern were as blunt as those of an Erie Canal boat. But, worst of all, she was so old that the life was out of all of her timbers, and some of them were wholly rotten.

Nevertheless, this energetic sailorman set about fitting her for a warship where a man of ordinary enthusiasm would have hesitated about trusting himself afloat offshore in her. What labor fitting her for sea implied may be inferred from the fact that, after a look at her, "he hastened to Bordeaux to order the casting of the cannon."

As an Indiaman the ship had carried guns on her main deck. The guns had been removed, and Jones went to Bordeaux to get eighteen-pounders to put there, but finding it would take too long to provide them, he was forced to content himself with twelve-pounders. On the forecastle and the quarterdeck he mounted nine-pounders—four forward and four aft. Then, as the ship stood high out of water, he went down on the deck below the main and had six ports cut through on each

Digitized by Google

side, and for these he procured six eighteen-pounders, which were installed, three on each side, leaving three empty ports on each side—ports which, though empty, served the purpose of making the enemy think his ship more powerful than it really was. As the event showed, it was not even as powerful as Jones supposed it was. But, worst of all among the perils of such a voyage as was proposed (had Jones been a man to calculate perils), was that found in the heterogeneous character of his crew when shipped. American naval ships have since had as curious mixtures as this one did, but it is worth noting that, besides Americans, it contained men from England, Ireland, and Scotland; from Norway, France, Spain, Portugal, Malta, and the Portuguese Islands; from Africa, India, and the Malayan Peninsula. With such a crew as this, and short-handed at that, Captain Jones had to go to sea; but, as will be told further on, he got some recruits of a stamp worth having. Meantime, while fitting out the *Bonhomme Richard*, he was joined by Master's Mate Richard Dale, who had escaped from the terrors of the British prison. Dale shipped with Jones as master's mate, but he was what would be called in the slang of these days a "hustler," and before the ship sailed the discriminating eye of the master had picked him out for first lieutenant.

Digitized by Google

R. Dale

From an engraving by Dodson after the portrait by Wood.

Digitized by Google

Next to Jones, the credit of the great fight that followed was due to the unwearied zeal and the undaunted courage of this man.

Meantime arrangements had been making to give Captain Jones a fleet instead of a single ship. The Congress had built a frigate of thirty-two guns—she carried thirty-six, however, all told—which, because of the recently formed alliance between France and the United States, was named the *Alliance*. As a further compliment to the French one Pierre Landais, a French naval lieutenant, was placed in command of her. It was a pleasant thing to compliment France, but disastrous to appoint Landais, for he had a vein of insanity in him due to brooding over his previous failure to gain promotion in the service of his own country. The *Alliance* was detailed to carry Lafayette home to France after his service in America, and this duty she performed, although she was narrowly saved from capture when a number of Englishmen in her crew mutinied—a crime, by the way, for which no penalty was inflicted, because of the noble generosity of Lafayette. The *Alliance* was ordered to sail under Captain Jones. To these was added a merchant ship called the *Pallas*, commanded by Capt. Denis Nicholas Cottineau. She was armed with thirty-two guns. Then a brig, called the *Vengeance*, Captain Ricot (also a

Digitized by Google

Frenchman), was secured, and then the squadron was completed with a man-o'-war cutter carrying eighteen small guns.

It was at first intended that Lafayette, with a considerable force of soldiers, should go with the fleet and make a flying assault upon Liverpool, but this project was abandoned because the French meditated a more formidable assault upon the somewhat "tight little isle." Then a general cruise against British commerce was proposed and carried out.

But before any detail of this cruise is given a paragraph must be inserted here from a letter of instructions which Franklin, as the head of the American commissioners in France, sent to Captain Jones. When considered in connection with the act of Parliament by which American prisoners in England were starved, it is worth printing in italics:

"*As many of your officers and people have recently escaped from English prisons, you are to be particularly attentive to their conduct toward the prisoners which the fortune of war may throw into your hands, lest the resentment of the more than barbarous usage by the English in many places toward the Americans, should occasion a retaliation and imitation of what ought rather to be detested and avoided for the sake of humanity and for the honor of our country.*"

Digitized by Google

It was on February 4, 1779, that Captain Jones was ordered to the *Bonhomme Richard.* It was not until June 19th that he was able to sail with his little fleet. He had a right to suppose that his troubles were now at an end, but as a matter of fact they were only begun. Capt. Pierre Landais was, from the start, mutinous. He had claimed superiority of rank, and this not being allowed, he was determined to thwart his chief in every way possible. On the first night out he ran the *Alliance* foul of the *Bonhomme Richard* by steering across her bows, carrying away his own mizzenmast and a lot of the headgear of the *Bonhomme Richard.* At this a return to port became necessary, and it was two months before the investigation by the authorities and the repairs were completed.

Unfortunate as this mishap appeared at the time, it proved in the end a blessing, for while lying in port 119 Americans came over from England through an exchange of prisoners, and more than 100 of them shipped with Captain Jones. In the fight that was to come not a man of these could have been spared.

When, on August 14, 1779, the fleet once more sailed from L'Orient, it had been augmented by the *Monsieur* and the *Granville,* two very good French privateers. But, although they added to the number of guns,

Digitized by Google

they were a source of trouble. When four days out the *Monsieur* captured a Holland ship that was in the hands of a British crew. The captain of the *Monsieur* appropriated this as the private property of his ship instead of the property of the squadron. When Jones interfered the two privateers left the squadron. As they were Frenchmen many of their countrymen in the fleet sympathized with them, and discontent was thus spread in the crews.

On August 21st a brigantine was captured and sent to L'Orient. On the 23d, off Cape Clear, the *Bonhomme Richard*, during a calm, was set toward some rocks by a current. When some rowboats were lowered with a line to tow her clear some Englishmen in one of them cut the tow-line and made a successful dash for shore. Sailing Master Lunt pursued them in another boat, was lost in a fog, and was finally obliged to go ashore. He was, of course, sent to Mill prison.

On the 24th Captain Landais came on board the flagship, and in a most insolent manner accused Captain Jones of losing the men through incapacity. He declared that "he was the only American in the squadron and was determined to follow his own opinion in chasing when and where he thought proper, and in every other matter that concerned the service."

Digitized by Google

And he did it, too. Had he done no worse Captain Jones would have been thankful.

On the 26th the squadron separated in a gale, only the *Vengeance* and a captured brigan-

Pierre Landais.

From a copy, at the Lenox Library, of a miniature.

tine remaining in sight of the flagship, but on September 1st, while the flagship was chasing a vessel near the Flannen Islands, the *Alliance* was sighted with a prize she had taken. The

Digitized by Google

prize proved very valuable, for she was well loaded with all sorts of rigging and stores that were in route to Quebec for use in fitting out a fleet on the American lakes.

On September 2d the *Pallas* was sighted, and two days later a Shetland pilot was taken, and Captain Jones called a council of his captains to consider the news obtained from him. Captain Landais refused to attend this, even when a written order to do so was sent him. However, he continued with the squadron that then sailed down the east coast of Scotland, until September 8th, when his vessel disappeared once more.

The squadron now consisted of but two vessels beside the flagship—the *Vengeance* and the *Pallas*. The *Cerf* had disappeared in the gale. On the 13th the Cheviot Hills were descried, and on nearing the coast next day a ship and a brig were captured. From the crews of these it was learned that there was no land battery to defend Leith, and that the only armed vessel in the firth or bay on which it stands carried but twenty guns.

Captain Jones called the captains of the other two ships on board and proposed an attack on Leith. "It is a matter of the utmost importance to teach the enemy humanity by some exemplary stroke of retaliation," he said. He explained that they could at once

Digitized by Google

capture some people of note to hold as hostages, and could so alarm the nation that public attention would be drawn to the north and away from the south coast, where the French were really preparing to invade. The French captains hesitated and argued half the night away, until Jones proposed to levy a heavy contribution on both Leith and Edinburgh that lay just behind Leith. Then they agreed with enthusiasm, but they had really lost their opportunity.

Returning to their ships, the captains made sail for Leith. The little squadron succeeded in entering the firth, and got as far as Kirkcaldy. They had, meantime, been seen from the coasts roundabout, and especially from the heights of Edinburgh, so that the country-side was in a terrible state of alarm. But luck was against the fleet, and the only result of the attempt on Leith that is worth mention is a good story of the parson of the Kirkcaldy Church.

The tide had run well out as the fleet approached Kirkcaldy. Some of the women of the town, at the first alarm of the coming of "the pirate," ran to the parson for protection. In answer to their cries he picked up the arm-chair in his study, and with it ran down to the low-water mark on the beach. He was in a perspiration when he got there and very much

Digitized by Google

out of breath, but as his flock gathered around him he plumped himself down in his chair, facing the sea, and appealed to Almighty God as follows:

"Now, Lord, dinna ye think it is a shame for ye to send this vile pirate to rob our folk

Leith Pier and Harbor.

From an old engraving.

o' Kirkcaldy? For ye ken they are puir enough already, and hae naething to spare. They are all fairly guid, and it wad be a pity to serve them in sic a wa'. The wa' the wind blows, he'll be here in a jiffy, and wha kens what he may do? He is nane too guid for onything. Muckle's the mischief he has done already. Ony pocket gear they hae gathered

Digitized by Google

thegither, he will gang wi' the whole o't, and maybe burn their houses, tak' their cla'es, and strip them to their sarks! And wae's me! Wha kens but the bluidy villain may tak' their lives? The puir women are maist frightened out o' their wuts, and the bairns skreeking after them. I canna tho't it! I canna tho't it! *I hae been long a faithfu' servant to ye, Lord;* but gin ye dinna turn the wind about, and blow the scoundrel out o' our gate, I'll nae stir a foot, but just sit here until the tide comes in and drowns me. *Sae tak' your wull o't, Lord!*"

While the parson prayed came one of the sudden squalls down from the mountains. The squalls are common enough at that season, but the parson's flock, on seeing the bay flecked over with the white foam ripped by a contrary wind from the tiny waves, with one accord shouted that the parson's prayer had been answered. The parson was so proud of his prayer that he wrote it out for his admirers, and so it has been preserved for the amusement of posterity.

As the old parson told the Lord, "the pirate" would have been upon them all "in a jiffy"—had he not been delayed by the argument with his captains, he would have reached Leith before the wind came out of the west. It seems singular at the first look that Jones

Digitized by Google

should have consulted the captains at all, but it must be told that he was obliged to do so because the jealous Landais had, before sailing, succeeded in getting the French minister to order such consultations when matters of great importance were in hand. The squadron was sailing under the American flag, but it had French orders.

On leaving the Frith of Forth the French captains became mutinous through fear of the British fleet sure to be sent from the south when the tale of the attempt on Leith was told there. They gave the captain until the 22d to make sail for other waters, and threatened to leave him if he did not do so. But they thought better of it afterwards.

The *Pallas* did, indeed, disappear on the 22d while the squadron was near Flamborough Head, but on the morning of the 23d the flagship, with the *Vengeance*, fell in with her at daylight and found the *Alliance* with her.

It should be told, by the way, that on the 22d, while the *Bonhomme Richard* was lying close in shore, she was accosted by a man in a small boat who said he had been sent by a member of Parliament living near the coast to ask for some powder and bullets for defence against "the pirate Jones," who was known to be on the coast. The *Bonhomme Richard* had

Digitized by Google

been mistaken for a British warship. Captain Jones sent a barrel of powder ashore

From an engraving by Guttenberg, after a drawing by Notté, in the collection of Mr. W. C. Crane.

with a message of regret saying that he had no projectiles of proper size.

But the day of all days in the career of John Paul Jones, the 23d of September, 1779, was

Digitized by Google

now at hand. At noon, as the four vessels of the squadron were jogging along to the north, they saw with mingled feeling of consternation and hope a fleet that numbered forty-two ships come around Flamborough Head. If this was a war fleet the fate of the squadron under the American flag was sealed, and he who was called in British state papers "the pirate Jones, a rebel subject and criminal of the state," would hang at Execution Dock. If it was a merchant fleet under an ordinary convoy the condition of affairs would be different—it would be a most exhilarating condition of affairs. There was a light breeze at the time and the big fleet was well inshore. As Captain Jones, after a prolonged examination, concluded that he had merchantmen in a convoy of two frigates before him, he saw a small boat pull hastily off to the larger of the two frigates and a man mounted from it to her deck. A moment later three signal flags were fluttering from the maintruck of the frigate and a gun was fired to windward—a signal to the merchantmen to seek safety in flight.

In wild confusion the merchantmen obeyed, scattering hither and yon; but the frigates, one of which was the *Serapis*, Captain Pearson, of fifty guns, and the other the *Countess of Scarborough*, Captain Piercy, of twenty-two six-pounders, bravely bore down to meet the

Digitized by Google

enemy, in spite of the fact that the Yankee fleet numbered four to their two. The captains of these two English ships were so far worthy foes of any naval commander that ever sailed.

Captain Jones now had what appeared an opportunity to not only capture two good warships of the enemy without a too severe fight, but, with good luck, some of the convoy. But once more the insubordination of Landais on the *Alliance* became manifest, and well-nigh fatally. He not only refused to obey the signal of the flagship to fall in line, but he sailed up near the *Pallas* and said to her captain :

"If it is a ship of more than fifty guns we have nothing to do but to run away."

Fortunately, Captain Cottineau saw that more glory was to be obtained by fighting the enemy than in quarrelling with the flag officer, and he gallantly sailed to meet the smaller British frigate.

The *Alliance* was held aloof. The *Vengeance* was too far away to take part in the battle.

In the movements of the fighting ships that followed, the wind was so light that they merely drifted over the oil-smooth water. The sun sank out of sight behind the hills and daylight faded away into darkness so that even

Digitized by Google

the lofty towers of canvas were seen only as the faintest shadows. But each side was hunting for the other, and eventually, in the profound silence of a night at sea, the *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Serapis* drew near each other. When but ten yards away from each other a voice from the *Serapis* demanded:

"What ship is that?"

"I can't hear what you say," replied Jones, wishing to get nearer before opening fire. For a moment the ships drifted on in silence as before, and then the voice was heard once more through the night:

"What ship is that? Answer, or I shall be under the necessity of firing into you."

Instead of answering the hail, Captain Jones in a low voice passed the word to fire, and the next instant the spurting flames from the American guns were answered, as it were, in the same breath by those of the British, and the night battle was begun. It was then exactly seven o'clock.

At the first fire two of the three eighteen-pounders in the lower-deck broadside of the *Bonhomme Richard* burst. "We could see that as we sighted for our next broadside, because we could see how they hove up the gun-deck above them," wrote Capt. Francis Heddart, who was a midshipman on the *Serapis* during the fight. And the midshipman

Digitized by Google

The Engagement between the *Bonhomme Richard* and *Serapis*.

From an engraving by Hamilton of a drawing by Collier.

Digitized by Google

and his men noted with glee that thereafter none of these, the heaviest guns on the Yankee's ship, was fired. The crews of the two guns that burst were all either killed or seriously wounded, and the men on that deck were called up to the main deck to help work the guns there. And most remarkable results followed on this move.

The *Serapis* had entered the fight close-hauled on the port tack and to leeward. The *Bonhomme Richard*, running free, sailed across the enemy's bow and then came to the wind, while the enemy veered off a little, and thereafter for one hour the two ships drifted side by side, drawing slowly nearer to each other, while the men, with desperate energy, worked their guns. But there was a vast difference in the guns. "We had ten eighteen-pounders in each battery below," wrote an officer of the *Serapis* afterward. "I do not see why any shot should have failed."

And no shot of that battery did fail during the first hour, and when they failed later it was because they had shot the six ports of the *Bonhomme Richard* into one huge chasm, not only on the side of her next to them, but on the further side as well, so that when they fired some of the battery the balls passed clear and fell into the sea beyond. There was not a splinter of the American ship left in front

Digitized by Google

of them. They had not only cut away the walls of the *Bonhomme Richard;* they had practically cleared her lower gundeck. There was no one left there save only a few marines that guarded the line of boys passing cartridges from the magazine up to the guns on the upper deck.

Nor was that the worst effect the English fire had had upon the *Bonhomme Richard.* Taking advantage of the rolling of the vessels in the long gentle swell, the English had been able to send a half dozen of their eighteen-pound shot into the *Bonhomme Richard* below the water-line, and she was "leaking like a basket."

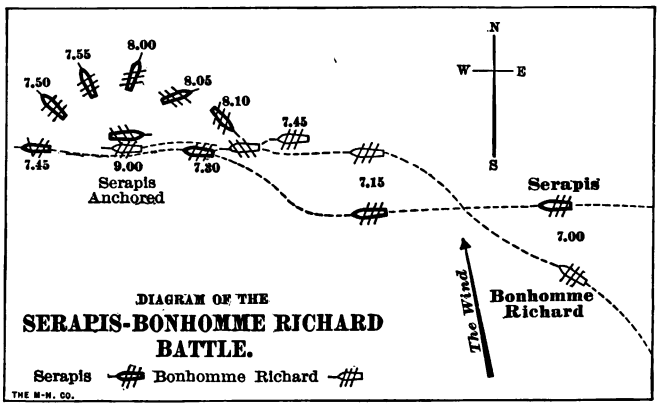
By this time the *Serapis*, having the wind of the *Bonhomme Richard*, drew ahead, intending to lie across the latter's bows and rake her. But the captain miscalculated his distance, got too far down in front, yawed off, and then putting his helm alee, came to the wind fair in front of the *Bonhomme Richard.* A minute later the *Bonhomme Richard* ran her jibboom over the stern of the *Serapis*, and then, because no great gun would bear on either side, the fire, save for an occasional musket shot, ceased.

For a moment the two ships hung together in silence, and then the voice of Captain Pearson was heard asking if the American ship had surrendered. And John Paul Jones replied:

Digitized by Google

"I have not yet begun to fight."

By the shifting of sails the two ships drifted apart. Once more the commander of the *Serapis* strove to get into position to rake, but as the *Serapis* wore around, the *Bonhomme Richard* forged ahead. Jones was determined to keep close to the enemy, and soon the jib-



Note.—At 7.30 o'clock, when John Paul Jones said, "I have not yet begun to fight," the bow of his ship was against the stern of the *Serapis*. He then backed his sails and went astern while the enemy, with full sails, went ahead until, say, 7.45, when the *Serapis* backed her foretopsail and wore around, bow from the wind, and came back. Meantime Jones had filled away, and the two ships got together at, say, 8.10 o'clock just where they had first touched. They then drifted westerly until 9 o'clock, when the *Serapis* anchored.

boom of the *Serapis* fouled the starboard mizzen rigging of the *Bonhomme Richard.*

Turning to Carpenter Stacy, who was near at hand, Jones ordered a hawser brought.

Digitized by Google

When it came he helped with his own hands to lash the jibboom of the *Serapis* fast to the mizzenmast of the *Bonhomme Richard.* While doing this the hawser fouled in some way and Stacy began to curse.

"Don't swear, Mr. Stacy," said Jones. "In another moment we all may be in eternity, but let us do our duty."

They did their duty, and the ships were held hard and fast, and John Paul Jones emphasized his faith in what had been done by saying:

"Well done, my brave lads. We have got her now."

And so they had in one way. One anchor of the *Serapis* dropped over on the *Bonhomme Richard*, and was secured where it would help to hold her, and more lashings were passed elsewhere. Even when the *Serapis* anchored she could not get away. But in the sense of capturing the *Serapis*, never was such a triumphant cry raised with a less hope of accomplishing the result.

The ships now lay with their starboard sides together. During the last half hour or so the crew of the *Serapis* had been working their port battery. When they ran across to work their starboard guns they were unable to open their ports amidships because the ships were touching each other, so they fired through

Digitized by Google

their own closed ports, blowing the port-lids off.

On the *Bonhomme Richard* the men were no less determined. Their remaining guns were fought even with cheerful vigor. Lieut. Richard Dale used to tell how, on going down on the gundeck, he saw a gun's crew of his men racing with a crew over in the *Serapis* to see which would get loaded first. The ships were side to side and the guns were muzzle-loaders. Each crew, to get its charge set home, had to poke its long-handled rammer through the enemy's port before it could be inserted into the gun's bore.

"Fair play, you damned Yankee," roared an English gunner, poking his rammer through the Yankee's port.

"Mind your eye, Johnny Bull," replied the Yankee, following the same movement.

Alas! the "Johnny Bull" had been a trifle ahead of the "damned Yankee," and firing his gun, he dismounted that on the *Bonhomme Richard.*

The British were, in fact, soon quite as successful in their handling of the main-deck battery as they had been with that on the lower deck. Every twelve-pounder but one on the *Bonhomme Richard* was silenced in one way and another, and so, too, were the little nine-pounders on the forecastle. There were then

Digitized by Google

The *Serapis* and the *Bonhomme Richard.*

From an engraving by Lerpinière after a drawing by Fitler.

Digitized by Google

but two cannon left in service on the *Bonhomme Richard*, the two nine-pounders on the fighting side of the quarter-deck.

John Paul Jones had been working these two with his own hands, loading one with double shot to cut down the enemy's mainmast, and the other with grape and canister to sweep away the crew on her deck.

In this desperate strait and when just in the act of ordering another nine-pounder brought from the off side that he might use it on the crew of the *Serapis*, his chief surgeon came up from below to announce that the water was coming in so fast as to float the wounded, and to ask that the ship be surrendered before she sank with all hands.

Turning on the surgeon with perfect self-possession, Captain Jones replied, as if astounded at the request:

"What, Doctor! Would you have me strike to a drop of water? Here, help me get this gun over."

The doctor ran back to the wounded without delay, but Jones got the gun over, and he served it, too.

A squad of twenty marines under Colonel de Chamilard had fled from the quarter-deck, where they had been stationed to pick off the enemy's gun crews.

The enemy made an attempt to board.

Digitized by Google

John Paul Jones, with a few men, pikes in hand, stopped him. The moonlight was now bright, and seeing this man before them—this "pirate"—they quailed.

Meantime matters had been going from bad to worse below decks on the *Bonhomme Richard*. Not only was she steadily filling with water; the blazing wads from the enemy's guns had set her afire in several places. These fires spread rapidly in spite of the efforts of some men sent below.

And then came the *Alliance* under Captain Landais. Sailing across the bow of the *Bonhomme Richard* and the stern of the *Serapis*, of course, as they lay together, he fired a broadside. The forecastle of the *Bonhomme Richard* received the greater part of the projectiles, and Midshipman Caswell was killed, while ten or a dozen seamen were killed and wounded. Private signals were set, and a score of voices yelled to the *Alliance* that they were firing into the wrong ship; but coming down on the broadside of the *Bonhomme Richard*, she fired again, so that the cry arose:

"The *Alliance* has been captured by the British and is now attacking us."

It is likely that this was the only moment when John Paul Jones thought of yielding, but as the *Alliance* drew off he continued the

Digitized by Google

fight not only against the enemy, but against the fire and water in his own ship.

And more to be feared were the fire and water. The ship was filling, and when the carpenter tried the water, he found it five feet deep in her hold, while the fire was rapidly approaching the magazine. On coming from the well, he said disconsolately that the ship would sink. At that the Master at Arms liberated the prisoners, two or three hundred in number, who were confined below, and told them to save themselves. The struggle and confusion that followed as these men came from their quarters were frightful. Here were, indeed, many more English subjects running free than all the crew of the *Bonhomme Richard* who were below decks. There were almost as many as the entire crew. Then the gunner, who had heard the remark about sinking and had seen the prisoners liberated, ran to the poop-deck, and in a panic of fear strove to find the signal halliards that he might haul down the flag in token of surrender. He was shouting as he ran:

"Quarter! for God's sake, quarter! Our ship is sinking"; but John Paul Jones heard the words, and turning around, he hurled an empty pistol at the man's head, fractured his skull by the blow, and knocked him headlong down the hatch.

Digitized by Google

"Do you call for quarter?" shouted Captain Pearson, who had heard the cry.

"Never!" replied John Paul Jones.

"Then I'll give you none," replied Pearson, and the fight went on, while Jones sent his resourceful lieutenant, Richard Dale, below to see why the cartridges of powder were no longer coming up, for neither he nor Dale at this moment knew that the prisoners had been released.

But when he saw the condition of affairs below, Dale, instead of quailing, with ready wit told the prisoners that the *Serapis* was just sinking and their only hope of life was in keeping the *Bonhomme Richard* afloat. At this the whole mob of them went to the pumps and to fighting the fire. They worked in gangs till they dropped from sheer exhaustion, when other gangs took their places.

There was one of them—a captain of a captured ship—who did not believe the story. He climbed through the ports to the *Serapis* and told of the hopeless condition of the American crew. But his story was discredited because of an extraordinary occurrence on the *Serapis*. As the ships lay together the mainyard of the *Bonhomme Richard* stretched fair over the main hatch of the *Serapis*. Noticing this fact, a bright marine in the maintop of the *Bonhomme Richard* took advantage of it.

Digitized by Google

The marines in the tops had been of the utmost service in clearing the decks of the enemy already, but this man, with a leather bucket of hand grenades and a candle, climbed out on the mainyard until over the hatch of the *Serapis*, and then, securing his bucket to the sheet-block, he began dropping the lighted grenades into her hold.

The hand grenade is a shell near the weight of a baseball. The first one he dropped exploded on a great heap of gun cartridges that had accumulated along the lower deck behind the guns. A tremendous explosion followed.

"It was awful! Some twenty of our men were fairly blown to pieces. There were other men who were stripped naked, with nothing on but the collars of their shirts and wristbands. Farther aft there was not so much powder, perhaps, and the men were scorched or burned more than they were wounded. I do not know how I escaped, but I do know that there was hardly a man forward of my guns who did escape." So wrote Captain Heddart, already quoted. The explosion also set the *Serapis* on fire.

That was the decisive moment of the battle. While the British had been disabling all but three or four of the guns on the upper deck of the *Bonhomme Richard*, the men in the tops of the Yankee ship and the murderous fire of

Digitized by Google

Paul Jones Capturing the *Serapis.*

From an engraving of the picture by Chappel.

Digitized by Google

the nine-pounders, which Jones himself had worked, had gradually driven all the men off the upper deck of the *Serapis*. That Captain Pearson had escaped injury is a marvel, for he had with undaunted courage directed the battle from the quarter-deck. But as the smoke of the great explosion rose through his hatches, he found himself practically alone, while Jones, with a cocked pistol in hand, was rallying his men successfully to increase the fire of his upper-deck guns.

As the British commander saw the fight, he was now without men, and the other Yankee frigate had but a short time before fired a broadside from which some balls entered the *Serapis*. Captain Pearson knew nothing of the treachery on the *Alliance*. He knew nothing (and this was to his discredit) of the real state of affairs on the lower decks of the *Bonhomme Richard*. Going to his flag that had been nailed to the mast, he tore it down with his own hands.

A moment later John Paul Jones saw that the flag was down, and with such feelings of relief as can scarcely be imagined, gave the order "cease firing."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X

AFTER THE *SERAPIS* SURRENDERED

RICHARD DALE TOO BRIGHT FOR THE BRITISH LIEUTENANT—A FAIR ESTIMATE OF CAPTAIN PEARSON OF THE *SERAPIS*—THE TREACHERY OF LANDAIS—REMARKABLE ESCAPE FROM TEXEL—HONORS FOR THE VICTOR—"THE FAME OF THE BRAVE OUTLIVES HIM; HIS PORTION IS IMMORTALITY."

As soon as the flag was dragged down on the *Serapis*, John Paul Jones ordered Lieut. Richard Dale on board of her to take charge, but before he could do so the mainmast of the *Serapis* came crashing down, pulling the mizzentopmast with it. Then Dale jumped on the rail of his own ship, grasped the brace of the yard from which the lucky hand-grenade had been dropped, and swung himself down on the deck of the *Serapis*. A few of his crew followed him.

"As he made his way aft he saw a solitary person leaning on the tafferil in a melancholy posture, his face resting upon his hands. It was Captain Pearson. He said to Dale,

"'The ship has struck.' While hurrying him on [the *Bonhomme Richard*] an officer

Digitized by Google

CAPTAIN SIR RICHD PEARSON KNT.
Lieutenant Governor of Greenwich Hospital.

Digitized by Google

came from below and observed to Captain Pearson, that the ship alongside was going down.

"'We have got three guns clear, sir, and they'll soon send her to the devil.'

"The captain replied,

"'It's too late, sir. Call the men off. The ship has struck.

"'*I'll go below, sir, and call them off immediately*,' and he was about to descend when Dale, interfering, said,

"'*No, sir, if you please you'll come on board with me.*'"

The above is quoted from the "British Journal" of an old date. Dale was of the opinion that, once that officer got below, he would have disregarded the surrender—that he would have used the three guns to send the *Bonhomme Richard* "to the devil," as he had proposed to do. That he might have done so is not doubted.

And then came John Paul Jones to receive the sword of the defeated Pearson. According to the older accounts of this fight, Pearson said, as he handed his sword to his conqueror:

"It is painful to deliver up my sword to a man who has fought with a halter around his neck."

To this, it is said, Jones replied:

"Sir, you have fought like a hero; and I

Digitized by Google

John Paul Jones.

After a rare engraving.

make no doubt your sovereign will reward you in the most ample manner."

In the present era of intense desire for arbitration instead of war a historian of this battle has written that " The story that Captain Pear-

Digitized by Google

son said, in giving up his sword, that it added to his mortification to give up his sword to a man who fought with a rope around his neck, is an idle fabrication, and a slur on Captain Pearson."

Whether Captain Pearson said it or not cannot now be definitely determined, but the reader shall judge for himself, further on, whether the story is "a slur on" him or not.

The fight occurred so close inshore as to be plainly visible from the bluff overlooking the sea, and hundreds of people from the country-side gathered there to gaze upon the scene. For a time, of course, there was nothing distinguishable but the flash of the guns through the night, but after an hour the moon rose out of the sea, and then two ships, locked in the embrace of death, stood out in the midst of a cloud of smoke. That these spectators looked on confidently rejoicing in the prospect of a victory for their own ship, need not be doubted. How they rejoiced as they thought that their shores were now to be rid of the "pirates" is easily imagined; but who shall picture their consternation when a boatload of their countrymen escaped ashore and told the direful facts?

To show the spirit in which English historians have always written about any matter in which the American navy had part, it is worth

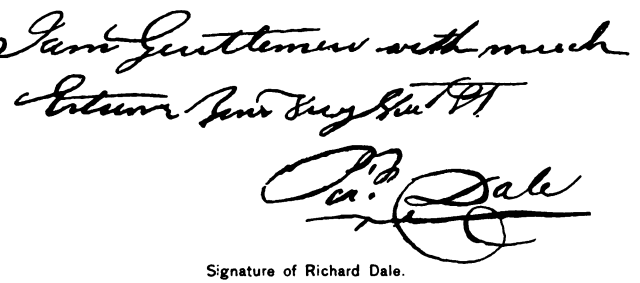
Digitized by Google

noting that Allen ("Battles of the British Navy"), ignoring the presence of tens of thousands of Hessians in the British forces in America, tries to throw contempt on the crew of the *Bonhomme Richard* by calling them "hirelings," and even stigmatizes the established fact of the treachery of Landais as an "absurd" charge.

A brief statement of the comparative strength of the two ships is essential. The *Bonhomme Richard* entered the fight with forty-two guns, which could throw 557 pounds of projectiles at a discharge; the *Serapis* carried fifty, throwing 600 pounds. After the first broadside the *Bonhomme Richard* had no eighteen-pounders in action, while the *Serapis* had twenty. The crew of the American ship had been reduced to 304 by the drafts made in manning prizes, and of these no more than one-third were Americans. The *Serapis* carried 320, chiefly picked men. So effective had been the work of the crew of the *Serapis* that at the end of an hour any ordinary man would have surrendered the *Bonhomme Richard;* but John Paul Jones was of different character from ordinary men. With a tenacity of purpose that has never been surpassed, he continued the fight and won. The number of killed on each ship was forty-nine. The *Serapis* had sixty-eight wounded and the *Bon-*

Digitized by Google

homme Richard sixty-seven, among whom were John Paul Jones himself and Richard Dale. Jones was hit in the head, and the wound afterwards seriously affected his eyes, but he said nothing about it in his report. Dale was wounded by a splinter during the fight, but did not even know it until after the fight was over. While sitting on the binnacle of the *Serapis* and giving orders to get her under way, he found she did not move when her sails were



Signature of Richard Dale.
From a letter at the Lenox Library.

full. He did not then know she was anchored. Jumping up to see what was the matter, he fell at full length on the deck. His blood had cooled by this time, and the wound disabled him then.

The smaller British ship that was protecting the convoy, the *Countess of Scarborough*, is lost to sight during the remarkable conflict between the *Serapis* and the *Bonhomme Richard*, but she was forced into battle by the gallant Captain ~~Piercy~~ of the *Pallas*, and for two

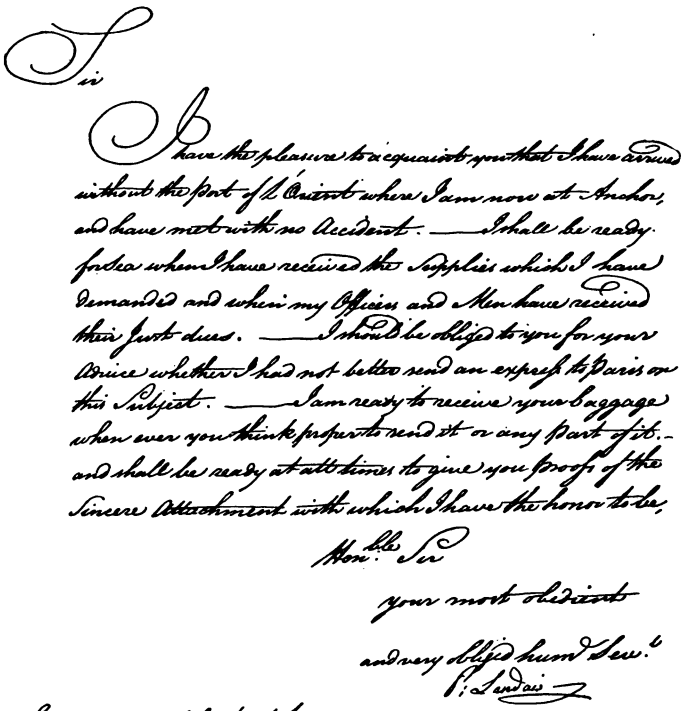
Digitized by Google

hours she maintained it. Then she surrendered. The *Pallas* was superior to her in guns and crew, but, on the whole, not to the extent that British historians would have their readers believe, for the *Pallas* was a merchant ship modelled to carry cargo only, while the *Countess of Scarborough* was built as a man-of-war.

Of the treachery of Captain Landais a brief space will suffice because, as already said, his disappointments while in the French service had made him partially insane. That he fired into the *Bonhomme Richard* was proved beyond any doubt by his own men, some of whom (the Americans) refused to fire the guns at his order. It was proved by his own officers (Frenchmen at that) that he said he would have "thought it no harm if the *Bonhomme Richard* had struck, for it would have given him an opportunity to retake her and to take the *Serapis*." A sane man would have been executed for such treachery as his, of course, but he was very properly dismissed only. He settled down in New York City after the war, where he lived on an income of $100 a year, derived from prize money that he had obtained. It was his habit to take a walk on lower Broadway every day when the weather and his health permitted. He was a curious figure there, for he "never appeared abroad

Digitized by Google

with his old-fashioned cocked hat in its legitimate station," but "carrying it forever in his


Sir

I have the pleasure to acquaint you that I have arrived without the Port of L'Orient where I am now at Anchor, and have met with no Accident. — I shall be ready for Sea when I have received the Supplies which I have demanded and when my Officers and Men have received their Just dues. — I should be obliged to you for your Advice whether I had not better send an express to Paris on this Subject. — I am ready to receive your Baggage when ever you think proper to send it or any Part of it. — and shall be ready at all times to give you proofs of the Sincere Attachment with which I have the honor to be,

Mon.ble Sir

your most obedient

and very obliged hum.e Serv.t

P. Landais

Ship Alliance below Port Louis
June 21.st 1780. —

Mon.ble Arthur Lee Esq.r

A Letter from Pierre Landais.

From the original at the Lenox Library.

hand, as a mark of homage and respect to, and in commemoration of the cruel death of his beloved sovereign."

Digitized by Google

John Paul Jones.

From a miniature, recently found (1897) *in a cellar at the Naval Academy.*

To return to the story of what happened immediately after the conclusion of the battle between the *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Serapis*, the facts may best be given in the words of John Paul Jones himself. In his report he says:

"I had yet two Enemies to encounter far

Digitized by Google

more formidable than the britons, I mean fire and Water. the *Serapis* Was attacked only by the first, but B. *h.* R. Was assailed by both, there was five feet Water in the hould, and tho' it Was moderate from Explosion of so much gun powder, yet the three pumps that remained could with difficulty only keep the Water from gaining. the fire broke out in Various parts of the Ship in spite of all the Water that Could be thrown (immediately) to quench it, and at length broke out as low as the powder magazine and within a few inches of the powder. in that dilema I took out the powder upon deck ready to be thrown overboard at the last extremity, and it Was ten O'clock A.M. the next day the 24 before the fire Was entirely extinguished. With respect to the Situation of the B. *h.* R. the rudder Was cut Entirely off the stern frame and transoms Were almost Entire Cut away, the timbers by the lower Deck especially from the mainmast to the stern, being greatly decayed With age, were mangled beyond my power of description, and a person must have been an Eye Witness to form a Just idea of the tremendous scene of carnage, Wreck and Ruin that Every Where appeared. humanity cannot but Recoil from the prospect of such finished horror and Lament that War should produce such fatal consequences.

Digitized by Google

John Paul Jones.

From a very rare engraving at the Navy Department, Washington.

"After the Carpinters as well as Captain De Cottineau and other men of Sense had well examined and Surveyed the Ship (which was not finished before five in the Evening) I found

Digitized by Google

every person to be convinced that it was Impossible to keep the B. *h.* R. afloat So as to reach a port if the Wind should increase it being then only a very moderate breeze. I had but little time to remove my Wounded, which now became unavoidable and which Was effected in the Course of the night and next morning. I was determined to keep the B. *h.* R. afloat and, if possible, to bring her into port for that purpose the first Lieutenant of the *Pallas* continued on board with a party of men to attend the pumps with boats in Waiting ready to take them on board in Case the water should gain on them too fast. the Wind augmented in the Night and the next day on the 25, So that it was Impossible to prevent the good old ship from Sinking. they did not abandon her till after nine o'clock. the Water was then up to the Lower deck, and a little after ten I saw With inexpressible grief the last glimpse of the B. *h.* R."

The *Bonhomme Richard* had gone into the fight with a great American ensign, four times as long as it was broad, floating in the breeze. It was shot away during the conflict and lay floating over the stern for a time, but it was rescued. And when it was seen that the old ship was past saving, the battle-torn flag was hoisted to its old place, and with that fluttering in the brisk air the famous old ship sank out of sight.

Digitized by Google

John Paul Jones.

From an engraving by Chapman in the collection of Mr. W. C. Crane.

When John Paul Jones arrived at Texel on October 3d a British squadron was close behind him. Sending in to the Dutch admiral, he asked permission to anchor in the harbor. The Dutch were not then at war with the English, and their admiral, influenced by the

Digitized by Google

attitude of the Dutch court, which was not friendly to the Americans, refused the permission, but later he grudgingly granted it, and the Americans arrived in after a narrow escape.

The conduct of Captain Pearson of the *Serapis* on arrival in Texel must be noted because it helps to portray that of his conqueror. When the plate, linen, etc., that had been taken from the *Serapis* were offered to him by John Paul Jones, he refused to accept it from Jones, but said he would take it if offered by Captain Cottineau of the *Pallas*. "Paul Jones magnanimously overlooked this vulgar subterfuge, and returned it through Cottineau." In view of this undisputed fact, is it really a slur on Captain Pearson to suppose that he said what he is charged with saying when he surrendered his sword? The British, through their ambassador, demanded that the *Serapis* and her consort be returned and that the Americans be delivered up as pirates. The Holland court did not yield that far, though they compelled John Paul Jones to go to sea in the face of a blockading squadron, and because the request of the British was refused, war was declared against Holland. And so the victory of the *Bonhomme Richard* was far-reaching in its effects.

To offset the manifest advantages which

Digitized by Google

accrued to the Americans through this fight, and especially to counteract the fear and depression which it occasioned throughout England and Scotland, the British ministry adroitly chose to treat Pearson as well as if he had obtained a victory. He was made a knight, and some London merchants were induced to give him silver plate worth £100. Piercy was promoted, and got silver worth £50. When John Paul Jones heard of Pearson's luck he said:

"He has deserved it; and if I should have the good fortune to fall in with him again, I will make him a lord."

The flight of John Paul Jones from Texel in the *Alliance* was characteristic of the man, for instead of taking the long route around the north of the British Islands he boldly headed for the narrow Straits of Dover, leaving port in a howling gale. He passed so close to Dover that he counted the warships in the Downs, and he counted those at Spithead also. He sailed from Texel on December 27, 1779, and he reached Corruna on January 16th. It is worth noting that throughout this extraordinary passage he kept the American flag flying.

On reaching Paris, John Paul Jones was the hero of the day. The American commissioners paid him every honor. The king

Digitized by Google

John Paul Jones's Medal.

(Louis XVI) gave him a gold-hilted sword appropriately inscribed and the Grand Cross of the Order of Military Merit. When he appeared in the queen's box at the opera the

Digitized by Google

whole audience rose up to cheer. Later in the evening a laurel wreath was suspended above his head, but he left his seat then—"an instance of modesty which is to this day held up as a model to French schoolboys."

In the autumn of 1780 Jones sailed to America in the *Ariel* with supplies for the American army. He was the honored guest of the greatest men of the nation. The Congress passed resolutions in his honor three times. It gave him a gold medal, and it placed him at the head of the navy, which was an honor that he had fully earned and which was to him a greater satisfaction than all other honors.

Meantime the British government denounced John Paul Jones as a pirate and put a price upon his head. It offered ten thousand guineas for him, dead or alive, and that sum then was equal to more than $100,000 now.

It is to the glory of this naval captain that it was so. The English writers to this day deliberately misrepresent the man. They strive to distinguish him from all other heroes of the American Revolution because he was born in Scotland. They pretend to admire those who were born in the colonies. But in so distinguishing Jones they ignore the fact that the heroic General Montgomery, who perished

Digitized by Google

before the icy walls of Quebec, was born in Ireland, as was Commodore John Barry, another American hero. The truth is that John Paul Jones entered the American navy in December, 1775, when every man in the service was a citizen of Great Britain. He became a citizen of the United States when the new nation was born. At the end of the war he could make the proud boast that "I have never borne arms under any but the American flag, nor have I ever borne or acted under any commission but that of the Congress of America."

John Paul Jones.

From an engraving in the collection of Mr. W. C. Crane.

"I have ever looked out for the Honour of the American flag," he writes at another time, and when, at the last, he wrote his will in the face of death, he described himself, although he had been loaded with honors, simply as

Digitized by Google

"John Paul Jones, a citizen of the United States."

"The fame of the brave outlives him; his portion is immortality."

L'Orient August 19th. 1785.

Sir,

I am by this days Post, honored with yours of the 13th. Inst. which appears to have been intended to have been forwarded by Mr. Barnes. I esteem myself particularly obliged by that mark of your attention; but, as there is no mention made of my Letter to you of the 31st Ult. I presume it has miscarried, and it is therefore that I have now written the foregoing Copy. The 6th of this month, finding a Ship here bound directly for Philadelphia, I sent a Copy of Monsieur de Soulanges's Letter to Mr. Jay for the information of Congress.

I had the honor to write you the 17th. to inform you that I was just then told that two of the Seamen formerly of the Alliance Frigate, who are now here in a Brig belonging to Boston, have been wrought upon by an expectation of immediately receiving their Prize-money, to desire that Mr. Barkelberg might in their Name object to sending the Prize-money of the Alliance to America. — That Brig is now at Port-Louis, and will for Boston it is supposed to Morrow morning.

I am with great esteem & respect,

Sir your most obedient and most humble Servant

P. JONES

His Excellency
Thomas Jefferson Esqr. Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States at the Court of France

A Letter from John Paul Jones to Thomas Jefferson.

From the original at the Lenox Library.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI

THE YEAR 1779 IN AMERICAN WATERS

LUCKY RAIDS ON BRITISH TRANSPORTS AND MERCHANTMEN—DISASTROUS EXPEDITION TO THE PENOBSCOT—THE *TRUMBULL'S* GOOD FIGHT WITH THE *WATT*—THE FIRST YANKEE LINE-OF-BATTLE-SHIP—WHEN NICHOLSON, WITH A WRECKED SHIP AND FIFTY MEN, FOUGHT FOR AN HOUR AGAINST TWO FRIGATES, EACH OF WHICH WAS SUPERIOR TO THE YANKEE SHIP—CAPTAIN BARRY'S EXASPERATING PREDICAMENT IN A CALM—THE LAST NAVAL BATTLE OF THE REVOLUTION.

WHILE John Paul Jones was moving heaven and earth to get away to sea with his famous *Bonhomme Richard*, the American naval ships in home waters were by no means idle, even though British successes, with combined land and naval forces, had seriously reduced the fleet. On March 18, 1779, a squadron consisting of the frigate *Warren*, thirty-two guns, Capt. John Burroughs Warren; the *Queen of France*, twenty-eight guns, Capt. Joseph Olney, and the famous old *Ranger*, of eighteen guns (she that whipped the *Drake*), under Captain Simpson, sailed from Boston. A few days later a privateer was captured. From her crew it was learned that a fleet of armed

Digitized by Google

transports and storeships had sailed with supplies from New York for the British army in the South.

How the Yankee squadron crowded on sail in pursuit of this fleet; how the ships of the fleet were sighted two days later, jogging along at the ordinary pace of the slowest; and how they came to the wind or squared away or tacked or wore ship in a confused effort to escape at the sight of the Yankees would have been something worth seeing by any one interested in ocean races.

There were nine of the transports, and seven were taken. These included the *Jason*, twenty guns; the *Maria*, sixteen guns; the *Hibernia*, eight guns, and four unarmed transports. Captain Campbell and twenty other English army officers were in the fleet *en route* to join their regiments, and these were by no means an unimportant part of the capture when one recalls the treatment Americans were receiving from the British when captured.

The Captain Hopkins who had this good luck was a son of Esek Hopkins, the first American naval captain. He carried his prizes into port at once.

Then, in May the frigate *Queen of France*, under Capt. John P. Rathbourne; the *Ranger*, under Simpson, and the *Providence* (twenty-eight guns), under Capt. Abraham Whipple,

Digitized by Google

went on a cruise. Whipple, it will be remembered, was the leader of the party disguised as Indians who, with paving stones as their chief weapons, captured and destroyed the schooner *Gaspé* in the first salt-water conflict of the war (1772). Captain Rathbourne was he who, in the little brig *Providence*, captured New Providence Island on January 27, 1778, with six vessels that were in the harbor.

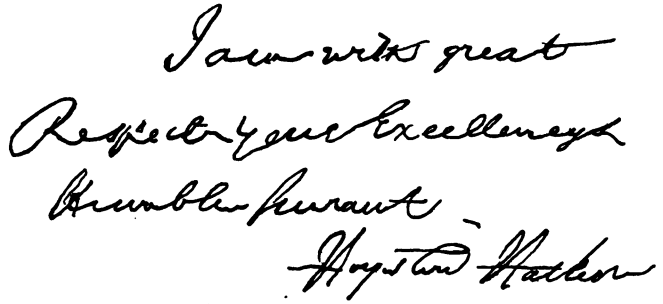
For two months this squadron did nothing, but early in July they fell in with a great fleet of merchantmen escorted by a ship-of-the-line (seventy-four guns) and a number of frigates. Notwithstanding the efficiency of this guard, the Yankees cut out eleven of the merchant ships and carried them into port. It is recorded that the cargoes of these ships were worth over a million dollars in gold, and that this cruise was financially the most profitable of the war.

Meantime there was a fight between brigs that shows at once the wonderful courage and endurance of the Anglo-Saxon seaman, no matter on which side of the Atlantic his home is found, and the further fact that in 1779 the Yankee sailor was becoming somewhat skilled as a man-o'-war'sman. The American brig *Providence*, Capt. Hoysted Hacker, fell in with the English brig *Diligent*, Capt. Thomas Davyson, May 7th. At the end of an hour

Digitized by Google

the *Diligent* struck her colors, but she had lost twenty-seven in killed and wounded out of her crew of fifty-three before she did so. The *Providence* lost only four killed and ten wounded.

The *Diligent* was at once taken into the American service, but disaster overtook the squadron in which she sailed. The enemy



Signature of Hoysted Hacker.

From a letter at the Lenox Library.

had established a fort on the Penobscot for convenience as a base for operating against Massachusetts. Accordingly 1,500 militia were sent with a fleet of transports and privateers to capture it. With this fleet went the frigate *Warren*, Capt. Dudley Saltonstall; the brig *Diligent*, and the old brig *Providence*, that had seen service from the first.

The expedition reached the Penobscot on July 25, 1779, and found not only a fort, but three warships, aggregating forty-nine guns,

Digitized by Google

ready for a fight. An attack was made, but the Americans were repulsed. They then began the slower process of reducing the works by siege, but on August 13th a British fleet of one ship-of-the-line (sixty-four guns), three frigates of thirty-two guns each, three sloops-of-war aggregating forty-eight guns, and a brig of fourteen guns, appeared.

At this the privateers scattered, each captain seeking safety as he thought best, regardless of the safety of the others. The American naval fleet, with the transports, retreated up the river, where all were destroyed to prevent the enemy getting them. It was a very heavy blow to the American naval forces.

Among the English squadron was the frigate *Virginia* that had grounded in the Chesapeake while trying to get to sea for the first time in 1778, when her commander, Captain Nicholson, abandoned her to the enemy.

While the British were approaching the Penobscot on this expedition, this Captain Nicholson, in the thirty-two-gun frigate *Deane* (sometimes called the *Hague*), and Capt. Samuel Tucker, in the twenty-four-gun *Boston*, sailed on a cruise. They captured six prizes, including a privateer of twenty guns, another of eighteen, and a merchantman armed with sixteen guns. The eighteen-gun privateer was the *Thorn*. After returning to port,

Digitized by Google

From a very rare engraving at the Lenox Library.

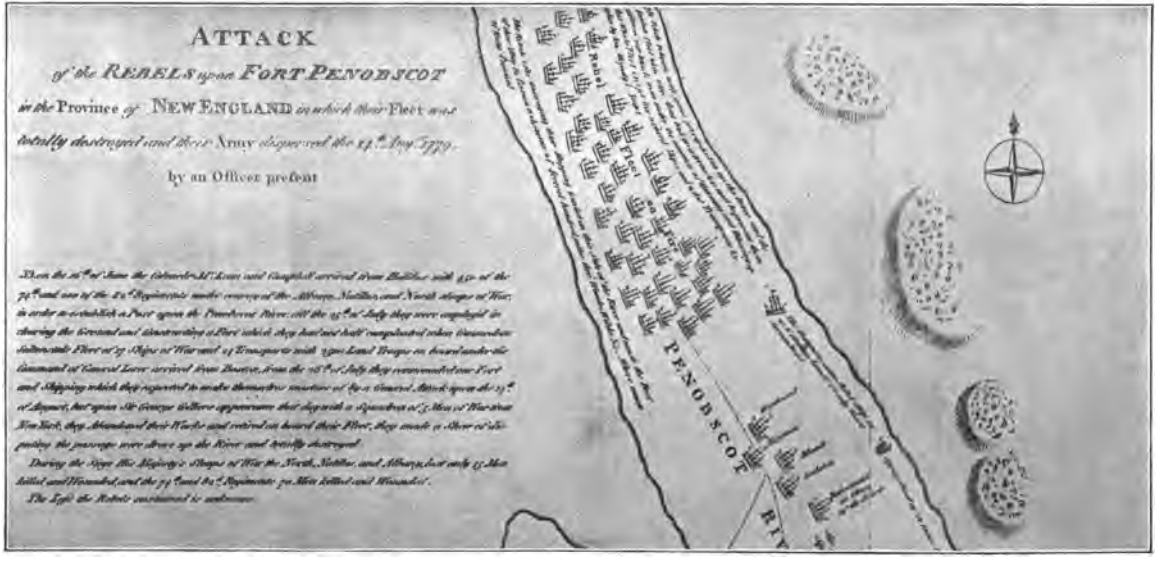
Digitized by Google

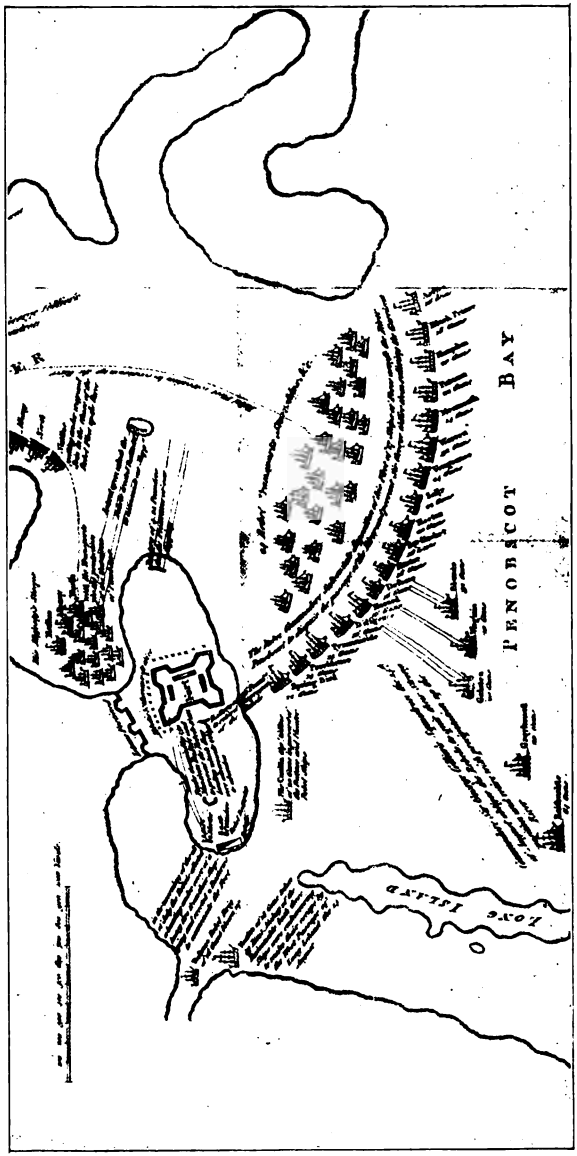
Digitized by Google

Captain Tucker took the *Boston* to Charleston, and when that place surrendered he was made prisoner, but was soon after exchanged for the captain of the *Thorn*, whom he had captured earlier in the year. Returning to Boston, he was ordered to take command of the captured *Thorn*, and in the cruise that he then made he took seven vessels. As he had captured thirty vessels before he entered the navy, it is likely that Captain Tucker took more prizes during the Revolution than any other commander.

When Charleston fell, there were lost with the *Boston*, just mentioned, the frigate *Providence*, of twenty-eight guns; the *Queen of France*, of equal metal, and the *Ranger*, in which John Paul Jones captured the *Blake*. Thereafter, of all the ships that the Congress had built or purchased and placed in service, only six remained in the American navy. These were the *Alliance*, of thirty-two guns, in which Landais had tried to betray John Paul Jones; the *Confederacy* and the *Deane*, of equal metal; the *Trumbull*, of twenty-eight guns; the *Duc de Lauzan*, of twenty guns, and the *Saratoga*, of eighteen. Worse yet, at the end of 1779 both officers and men were scarce because the British, knowing that the supply of American seamen was limited, had refused to exchange sailor prisoners in order that they might so keep the American forces reduced. And of

Digitized by Google


ATTACK
of the REBELS upon FORT PENOBSCOT
in the Province of NEW ENGLAND in which their Fleet was
totally destroyed and their Army dispersed the 14th Aug. 1779.
by an Officer present
On the 26th of June the Colonels M.Lean and Campbell arrived from Halifax with 450 of the
74th and one of the 82d Regiments under convoy of the Albany, Nautilus and North sloops of War,
in order to establish a Post upon the Penobscot River: till the 25th July they were employed in
clearing the Ground and constructing a Fort which they had not half completed when the under-
mentioned Fleet of 19 Ships of War and 25 Transports with 1300 Land Troops on board under the
Command of General Lovet arrived from Boston. From the 28th of July they commanded our Fort
and Shipping which they expected to make themselves masters of by a General Attack upon the 13th
of August, but upon St. George's River appearing that they had a Squadron of 5 Men of War above
New York, they Abandoned their Works and retired on board their Fleet, they made a Show of Si-
tacking the passage over above up the River and Artillery destroyed.
During the Siege the Majesty's Sloops of War the North, Nautilus, and Albany, lost only 15 Men
killed and Wounded, and the 74 and 82d Regiments 30 Men killed and Wounded.
The Light the Rebels endeavoured to undermine.
PENOBSCOT

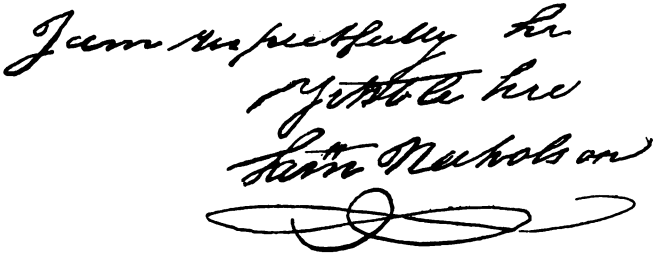


From a contemporary map at the Lenox Library.

Digitized by Google

the seamen available for the navy not a small proportion preferred to sail in privateers because of the chances of great gains found in them.

Because of this condition of affairs it happened that when Capt. James Nicholson sailed in the *Trumbull* on the last day of May, 1780, for a cruise along the American coast his crew contained more landsmen—men and



Signature of Samuel Nicholson.

From a letter at the Lenox Library.

boys who had never been outside of any harbor—than of seamen. With such a mob as this in place of a crew, he fell in with a big British privateer on June 2d.

Nicholson had his sails trimmed like a merchantman's, and the privateer drew near to inspect, but soon saw that the *Trumbull* was a man-o'-war. At that, although he carried thirty-four guns to the Yankee's twenty-eight, he made sail to escape. But Nicholson was after him with a swifter ship, and fight he had

Digitized by Google

to. A right stubborn fight it was, too. It began at a range of 100 yards, and it was soon carried on with yardarms interlocked. The blazing gun-wads of the enemy were several times blown through the open parts of the *Trumbull*, and she was twice set on fire. But at the end of three hours, and just when the enemy's fire had slacked away to the point of surrendering, the *Trumbull's* mainmast went by the board, dragging the fore topmast and the mizzen after it, and there she lay helpless.

The privateer might have riddled her then, but he had had enough, and was glad to get away.

It was learned afterward that the enemy was the *Watt*, a privateer especially designed and fitted to whip any American frigate. She lost ninety in killed and wounded. The *Trumbull* lost thirty-nine in killed and wounded.

Perhaps the most curious fact about this fight was this, that a very large proportion of the *Trumbull's* crew were suffering from the worst stage of seasickness when she opened fire. The *Trumbull* made port, but was unable to see service again until August of the next year.

Meantime the *Saratoga*, under Capt. James Young, sailed from Philadelphia in October, 1780, and on the 8th fell in with

Digitized by Google

three vessels. By hoisting English colors, the largest, a heavily armed ship, was decoyed alongside, where she reported herself as a merchantman called the *Charming Molly*, from Jamaica. At this the *Saratoga* hoisted the American flag, gave her a broadside, and crashing alongside, threw grapnels over her rail and rigging and held her fast.

The first lieutenant of the *Saratoga*, at this time, was Joshua Barney, whose exploit in the *Hyder Ali* has already been described. At the head of a party of fifty boarders Barney climbed over the rail of the merchantman, and after a sharp fight cleared her deck. Then it was learned that she carried ninety men. She was manned by a prize crew under Barney, and sent in. The *Saratoga* then made sail after the other two, who had been fleeing down the wind to escape. It is not hard for a sailorman to picture their hopeless race as the long Yankee, with a cloud of canvas aloft and the white foam roaring away from her bows, came a-whooping after them. It was a hopeless race because they were only brigs, the one carrying fourteen and the other four guns. They were taken without resistance, and manned and sent toward port.

Nevertheless, that was a most disastrous cruise for the *Saratoga*. With her prizes she sailed for the Delaware, but she fell in with

Digitized by Google

the *Intrepid*, a ship of seventy-four guns, on duty there. Ordering her prizes to scatter, she made all sail, and with success, for she got away. But she found an enemy more powerful even than a ship-of-the-line. She found, doubtless, an October hurricane, for she was never heard of after she disappeared from the view of the *Intrepid's* lookouts. The prizes, too, were all recaptured.

So five warships only were left to carry the American flag. Another was building at Portsmouth, New Hampshire—the *America*, a seventy-four-gun ship-of-the-line. John Paul Jones was assigned to her, but before she was launched, the French ship-of-the-line *Magnifique* was wrecked in the Massachusetts Bay, and the Congress, to show its appreciation of what the French had done to help the United States, presented the *America*, while still on the ways, to the French king.

That act was crushing to John Paul Jones; but when all was ready for the launching, he hoisted the flags of both nations, and so sent her into the water. And that was the last service he rendered his adopted country. No other ship fit for the head man of the navy remained afloat, and the Congress could not build another like the *America*. And then came the end of the war, when Jones entered the Russian service, subject to a call at any

Digitized by Google

time from the American Congress, and without sacrificing his American citizenship, and there he became a rear admiral. Leaving that service, he was appointed American consul to Algiers, a most important post, as will appear further on; but before the slow mail brought his commission he died in Paris on July 18, 1792.

To return once more to the frigate *Trumbull*, it must be said that if any doubt as to his courage or persistency was created in the minds of the American people when he abandoned the grounded *Virginia* without firing a gun in her defence, Captain Nicholson redeemed himself in his last battle in the *Trumbull*, even though he lost her.

The *Trumbull* sailed in August, 1881, as an escort for a fleet of twenty-eight merchantmen. If her crew was inefficient when she fought the privateer *Watt*, it was now well-nigh the worst conceivable for the occasion; for in numbers she lacked 200 men of a full complement—she had less than half the number needed to work and fight the ship—while of the hundred and odd men she did carry, many were landsmen, and a lot more were Englishmen, who, on learning that she was certain to go to sea shorthanded, shipped in her in the hope of finding opportunity for a mutiny. This was not an unusual circumstance during

Digitized by Google

the Revolution, for the British Parliament had passed an act offering a large bounty to her "loyal subjects" who, after making oath to support the American Constitution, should be able to carry an American ship into a British port.

When off the capes of the Delaware this worse than half-manned *Trumbull*, in a gale lost her fore topmast and main topgallantmast —a misfortune unquestionably due to the misconduct of her English crew. She was then not only worse than half-manned, but she was worse than half-found in sails.

While in this condition (and it should be remembered that the *Trumbull* carried but twenty-eight guns) the British frigate *Iris* (formerly the American frigate *Hancock*), of thirty-two guns, ranged up on one side of her, and another British ship, name unknown, on the other.

Instead of surrendering, as he would have been justified in doing, Captain Nicholson cleared the ship for action, and the battle began. And then at the first broadside the Englishmen to a man, by preconcerted action, fled to the hold and succeeded in frightening the landsmen into following them, so that but fifty men were left to fight the enemy.

But among those fifty were Richard Dale from the deck of the *Bonhomme Richard*, and

Digitized by Google

one Christopher Raymond Perry, who will be heard of later, and the summons to surrender was scorned. Never before had such a fight as this occurred—a fight wherein fifty men in a crippled ship of twenty-eight guns struck

Jas. Nicholson

After a miniature in the possession of Miss Josephine L. Stevens.

back at a thirty-two-gun ship carrying seven times as many men and helped by another ship that was itself undoubtedly more than a match for a cripple. And yet for an hour James Nicholson, Richard Dale, and Christopher Raymond Perry kept their men at the

Digitized by Google

guns. Sixteen men were killed and wounded out of the valiant fifty. Even then the flag was still flying. There is no telling how long the desperate conflict would have continued; but a third British ship, the *General Monk*, came into the fight and in a position to rake the American at short range. It was a case then of surrender or sink, and the flag of the *Trumbull* was hauled down.

In March of 1781 the *Alliance*, under Capt. John Barry, was found in a most exasperating position off the British coast. She had sailed from Boston in February, and after taking a privateer called the *Alert*, reached L'Orient safely. There she was joined by a French privateer of forty guns, called the *Marquis de la Fayette*. Sailing on March 31st, they captured the British privateers *Mars*, of twenty-six guns, and the *Minerva*, of ten, the two carrying crews aggregating 167 men. Then the *Alliance* went on alone, and on May 28th fell in with two smaller vessels that boldly attacked her.

It had been a quiet day, but as the two smaller vessels approached, the *Alliance* lost the wind altogether, while the others, with the aid of big oars, came on, took safe positions at short range under her quarters, and opened fire. Captain Barry could bring only three nine-pounders to bear on each of the enemy,

Digitized by Google

while they were delivering heavy broadsides of eight and seven guns, respectively. Captain Barry was so badly wounded by a grape-shot that he was carried below; but just when the surrender of the *Alliance* seemed inevitable a breeze filled her sails, and swinging around, she ran in between the two enemies, and with broadsides from her eighteen-pounders quickly brought down their flags. One was the sixteen-gun brig *Atalanta*, and the other the fourteen-gun brig *Trepassy*. They lost ten killed and thirty wounded between them. The *Trepassy* was sent to England with prisoners, and the *Atalanta* to the United States, but she was recaptured off Boston. The *Alliance* reached port safely.

A little later (June 22, 1781) the *Confederacy* was captured by the English. She was employed as a government packet to keep open communication with France, but while returning home laden with military supplies a two-decker and a frigate, the *Orpheus* and the *Roebuck*, overtook her, and her commander, Capt. Seth Harding, had to strike his colors.

The last naval action (the *General Monk* was captured later by a privateer) of the Revolutionary war was fought by the *Alliance*, Capt. John Barry. He had sailed from Havana with a large quantity of specie for the United States. This was March 7, 1782. She had

Digitized by Google

the *Duc de Lauzan* in company. When not long out of port three British frigates were encountered. The Yankees started to run for it, and the *Lauzan*, a slow sailer, was ordered to throw her guns overboard.

However, a French ship of fifty guns hove in sight on the weather bow, and at that Captain Barry waited for the leading English frigate, supposing the Frenchman would join in, of course. A fight that brought glory to Barry and credit to the Englishman followed, but at the end of fifty minutes the Englishman had out signals of distress. As the Frenchman held aloof, Captain Barry was compelled to let the Englishman haul off under cover of his consorts.

The English ship was the *Sybille* (sometimes written *Sibyl*), of thirty-eight guns—a heavier ship than the *Alliance*. She lost thirty-seven killed and fifty wounded, while that of the *Alliance* was three killed and eleven wounded.

The significant feature of this fight is in the wide margin between the two lists of killed and wounded. The Yankees had at last learned to handle cannon effectively. But now the end of the war had come.

Four months before this last naval fight of the American Revolution Lord North, the British premier, on hearing of the surrender

Digitized by Google

of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, had strode up and down his room with his arms frantically waving above his head, while he cried:

"Oh, God! it is all over. It is all over. It is all over."

The "most accursed, wicked, barbarous, cruel, unjust, and diabolical" war known to the history of the English-speaking people was over, and during the latter end of March, 1782, "Lord North bowed to the storm and resigned."

On July 4, 1776, when the Congress declared the independence of the colonies, the American navy consisted of twenty-five vessels, all sizes counted, mounting 422 guns. Thereafter other ships were built, and some were purchased and some were captured from the enemy and put into service. But because the enemy at all times had more than five guns afloat and in service on the American coast to every one that the Americans mustered in the naval list, the American ships, one by one, fell into the hands of the enemy, or were destroyed to save them from such a fate, or were lost at sea. When the war ended but three naval ships, bearing eighty-four guns between them, remained. The American navy had almost perished, but, like Arnold's fleet on Lake Champlain, it had given the Englishman an opportunity to see the face of the

Digitized by Google

Sir

Ship's Montgomery July 12. 1777

You'll immedy put your Vessel in as Compleat Order for a State of Defence as you possibly can; the Men that I shall send on Board your Galley are to be immedy under your Command & follow your Directions Any Assistance that you want, or I can furnish you with, you may Rely on

I am &c. Your Hble Servt

John Hodgdy

To Capt. Abraham Lewis
of
Lady Washingston Galley

An Old Naval Order.

From the original at the Lenox Library.

Digitized by Google

enemy. Even as in the fight which the *Bonhomme Richard* waged, it won victory even when it was so shattered as to all but disappear while yet the smoke of battle hung over the water. For without the aid of the sea power the war of the Revolution would have failed. From that glorious day before Boston when the hearts of the Continentals were fired by the long wagon-train, loaded with war material, captured by an American cruiser from the enemy, until the last service of the *Alliance* in bringing specie from Havana, there was never a time when the sea power did not render helpful and glorious service to the struggling patriots ashore.

In the 800 ships that were captured from the enemy were found the materials that succored the life of the nation. Not one American cruiser was captured by English privateers, while sixteen English cruisers were taken by American privateers, which were manned in many cases for the most part by boys and haymakers, while in many an American victory the odds in weight of metal and number of men were greatly in the favor of the British. By their daring and persistence the Yankee cruisers made Yankee prowess known throughout Europe and even to the yeomanry of England.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII

BUILDING A NEW NAVY

WHEN ENGLAND, IN HER EFFORTS TO WREST COMMERCE FROM THE AMERICANS, INCITED THE PIRATES OF AFRICA TO ACTIVITY, SHE COMPELLED THE BUILDING OF THE FLEET THAT WAS, IN THE END, TO BRING HER HUMILITY OF WHICH SHE HAD NEVER DREAMED—DEEDS OF THE BARBARY CORSAIRS—AMERICAN NAVAL POLICY AS LAID DOWN BY JOSHUA HUMPHREYS—THE WONDERFUL NEW FRIGATES—TROUBLES WITH THE FRENCH CRUISERS ON THE AMERICAN COASTS—TRICK OF A YANKEE CAPTAIN TO SAVE A SHIP—A MIDSHIPMAN WHO DIED AT HIS POST—CAPTURE OF THE *INSURGENT*—A LONG WATCH OVER THE FRENCH PRISONERS—ESCAPE OF A TWICE-BEATEN SHIP—THE VALIANT SENEZ—STORY OF ISAAC HULL AND THE LUCKY *ENTERPRISE*.

IT is with feelings of distress and shame, not unmingled with indignation, that the patriotic American of these days reads such parts of the history of his country as have a bearing upon the navy during the years that followed the Revolutionary war.

No sooner was the war over than all the men that remained in the naval service were paid off and turned adrift on the beach, while every ship that remained—even the *Alliance*, that had well demonstrated her efficiency—was sold. The people of the new nation were so

Digitized by Google

fearful of a monarchial form of government, and of everything that in the old world pertained to it, that they went to the remarkable length of sacrificing the one weapon that could defend them from old-world encroachment—the navy—lest scheming politicians use it to enslave their own people.

But while the politicians wrangled over the chaotic conglomeration that, at the time, was called the general government, the business men made haste to retrieve the losses brought upon them by the war, and as there had been but two sources of income worth mention before the war—the commerce of the seas and agriculture—it was to them that the energies of the people were applied. It was an along-shore nation. The salt air fanned its most populous cities. So familiar were the people with the ocean, that every one spoke of the time when he should be rich as "when my ship comes home." So to the sea went hosts of people seeking fortune. The merchant with his capital, the land-owner with his timber, and the mechanic with his skill and muscle, united to build and man ships for the ocean-carrying trade, and so well did they work together that ships the equal of any other, in some cases the superior of any in the world, were sent down the ways. Men who had learned to be aggressive while afloat with

Digitized by Google

the flag in war-time were placed in command of these ships, and the contest for supremacy in trade, which had had so great a part in bringing on the Revolutionary war, was renewed with an energy and an independence of action of which the people as colonists had not dreamed. Even so small a craft as an Albany sloop was sailed away from New York for Canton, China. She had only a page-map from a school geography for a chart of the world, but she made her port and made home again, and she was the first sail to make the direct passage from New York to China waters.

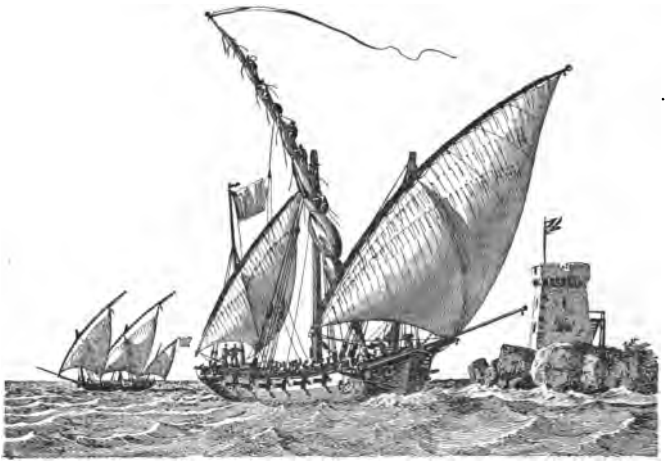
The British merchants with dismay saw their own ships passed by and the Yankees chosen by shippers of cargoes—chosen because both safer and swifter. And when the British merchant complained, he found (as he has always found) his government ready to listen and to act in his behalf.

What that government was willing to do to aid the British merchants was so discreditable that the story of it well-nigh staggers belief, although the proofs are, in fact, beyond doubt.

On the Mediterranean coast of Africa were found a number of small Mohammedan states ruled by vassals of the Turk. For time out of mind these petty rulers had levied a blackmail tribute from every seafaring na-

Digitized by Google

tion that traded in the Mediterranean Sea, and even sailed in their cruisers out upon the Atlantic to capture ships that were not intending to enter the enclosed waters. When one recalls how much superior the power of England was to that of all these pirates com-



A Mediterranean Corsair Anchoring.

From a picture drawn and engraved by Baugean.

bined, it seems astounding that even she should have contributed to the blackmail, but the reason for her doing so may be found in the debates of Parliament of that day. Said Lord Sheffield in 1784:

"It is not probable that the American States will have a very free trade in the Mediterranean. It will not be to the inter-

Digitized by Google

est of any of the great maritime powers to protect *them* from the Barbary States. If they know their interests, they will not encourage the Americans to be carriers. *That the Barbary States are advantageous to maritime powers is certain.*"

In short, England deliberately encouraged these infamous pirates because they harassed the ships of other nations, and on the payment of a small tribute, which was kept small because of her great navy, they left hers wholly unmolested.

But the mere avowal of this policy in the hall of Parliament was by no means all that she did. For some time previous to 1793 Portugal had maintained her rights upon the sea as against these pirates by keeping a strong fleet at the Strait of Gibraltar—a fleet that pounced upon every Barbary corsair that appeared. It was not for the protection of her own commerce only that this was done. By an understanding with the United States the American flag was protected and American merchantmen furnished with convoys when needed.

Under the protection thus afforded, the American merchantmen swarmed into the profitable trade on the east side of the Atlantic. English merchants viewed the increasing numbers of American ships there with dis-

Digitized by Google

may, and English diplomacy, as said, at once intervened.

Taking advantage of a general agreement among the so-called Christian powers, under which England was to be allowed to act for all in certain minor matters when negotiating with the Barbary powers, the British government instructed the British agent at Algiers to bargain secretly for a truce between the Dey and the government of Portugal. The truce was to last a year, and in consideration of allowing the Portuguese ships to trade free of blackmail, the Portuguese blockade was to be removed from the Strait of Gibraltar, and it was further provided that "the Portuguese Government *should not afford protection to any nation against Algerian cruisers.*"

The only nation that had been protected by Portuguese men-of-war was the American. This truce, which was arranged by the British consul-general at Algiers, Mr. Charles Logie, was deliberately planned to turn the pirates against American ships. Worse yet, it was done without even consulting Portugal, and in secret so that the pirates could get away before the Americans could possibly be warned. And once it was made, British influence at the Portuguese court prevented its abrogation.

Digitized by Google

As early as July 25, 1785, the Boston schooner *Maria*, Capt. Isaac Stevens, had been captured by Algerian pirates near Gibraltar, and on the 30th of the same month the ship *Dauphin*, Capt. Richard O'Brien, was also taken. Thus twenty-one American citizens were made slaves to the Arabs. Because of the Portuguese blockade of the strait no other American ship had been captured, but the moment British diplomacy had freed the pirates from that restraint, the Dey sent his corsairs seeking the American flag. There is no doubt in reasonable minds that a special search was made, at the request of the British agent, for the Stars and Stripes. In one cruise of the pirate squadron eleven vessels were captured and 112 American seamen were reduced to slavery.

Did the American nation declare war at once? It did not. It could not. There was not a warship afloat bearing the American flag.

Having no ships of war, Congress was forced to buy the freedom of these enslaved Americans. The men captured in 1785 were ransomed for $59,496 (coin). For the 112 captured at the instigation of the British agent, a far greater ransom was paid. The Congress had refused to build a navy for the protection of Americans when abroad, but now they were compelled to buy the release of enslaved

Digitized by Google

Americans by building the *Crescent*, "one of the finest specimens of elegant naval architecture which was ever borne on the Piscataqua's waters." They had to arm and fit her for sea. They had to freight her with "twenty-six barrels of silver dollars and many valuable presents for the Dey," and then send her to Algiers, where ship and cargo were given in exchange for the enslaved Americans.

"It is worthy of remark, that, as appears by documents published at the time, the peace obtained from the Dey of Algiers cost the Government of the United States near a million of dollars ($992,463.25), a sum quite sufficient to have kept the barbarian's port hermetically sealed until he should have humbly sued" for peace, had it been expended in building suitable warships. And so would have been saved the noble lives and the property afterwards lost on the African coast.

But out of the national humiliation sprang a new navy. The people who had called every legislator that spoke for the honor of the flag a blatant demagogue; the people who had feared naval tyrants, who had feared taxation, and who had argued that a small navy was worse than none—the peace-at-any-price men had been in a great majority. Now the publication of these facts opened the eyes of enough to make a majority the other way. Neverthe-

Digitized by Google

less, so little regard had the members of Congress for the honor of the nation that "the resolution of the House of Representatives, that a naval force adequate to the protection of the commerce of the United States ought to be provided, passed by a majority of two votes only."

However, pass it did, and was approved on March 27, 1794.

At that time the ablest shipbuilder in the United States was Joshua Humphreys, a Quaker, who for thirty years had been laying down keels at Philadelphia. Going to General Knox, the Secretary of War, he made a notable statement. The number of ships which the United States could support, he said, would always be less than the number in any of the large European navies. It was therefore necessary that such ships as we did have should be fast-sailing enough to either fight or run at will, and when they chose to fight they must be equal, ship for ship, to anything afloat. To accomplish this they must be longer and broader than the existing type and yet not so high out of water. On this model they would carry, he said, as many guns on one deck as the others carried on two; could fight them there to better advantage; and, what was more, the improved model would give much more stability—would allow so much

Digitized by Google

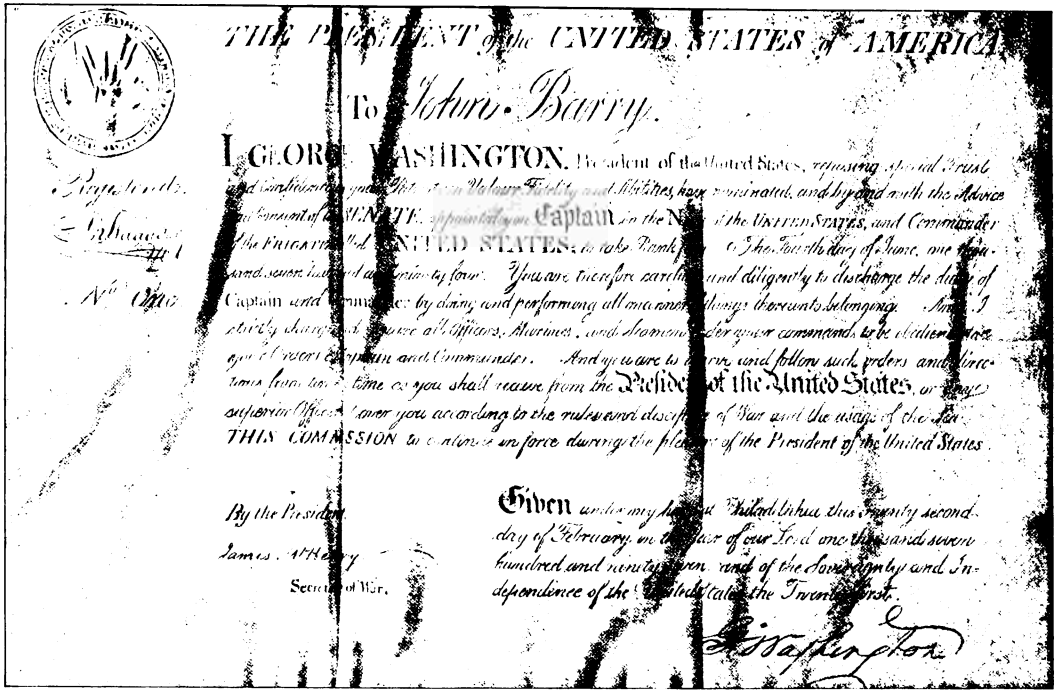
more canvas to be spread aloft that, blow high or blow low, the Yankee could show her teeth or her heels, as occasion demanded.

Not only were Humphreys' theories accepted then; they have prevailed in the American navy to this day. However, this is not to say that the theories of Mr. Humphreys have always been realized in practice.

Six frigates were ordered laid down on this model: the *Constitution*, of forty-four guns; the *President*, of forty-four; the *United States*, of forty-four—all sister ships—and the *Chesapeake*, the *Congress*, and the *Constellation*, all of thirty-six guns each.

The *United States* was built by Humphreys, at Philadelphia, and he sent her afloat on July 10, 1797. The *Constitution*, the famous "Old Ironsides," was built by Cloghorne & Hartly, of Boston, and she floated on October 21, 1797—just 100 years ago. And she is still afloat to bear the flag. Capt. Samuel Nicholson had charge of her (Congress had provided for officers and men), and on the day she was to be launched he proposed to hoist the flag with his own hands. But instead of doing so at once on reaching the yard that morning, he gave orders that no one else should do it, and then went away to breakfast. That was an error fatal to his ambition. When he was out of sight one Samuel Bentley, a ship-

Digitized by Google



THE PRESIDENT of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA

To John Barry.

I GEORGE WASHINGTON, President of the United States, reposing special Trust and Confidence in the Valour, Fidelity and Abilities, have nominated, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the SENATE, appointed you Captain in the Navy of the UNITED STATES, and Commander of the FRIGATE called the UNITED STATES: to take Rank from the Fourth day of June, one thousand seven hundred and ninety four. You are therefore carefully and diligently to discharge the duty of Captain and Commander by doing and performing all manner of things thereunto belonging. And I strictly charge and require all Officers, Marines, and Seamen under your command, to be obedient to your Orders as Captain and Commander. And you are to observe and follow such orders and directions from time to time as you shall receive from the President of the United States, or your superior Officers, according to the rules and discipline of War and the usages of the Sea. THIS COMMISSION to continue in force during the pleasure of the President of the United States.

By the President

James [illegible]

Secretary of War.

Given under my Hand and Seal of the United States, this twenty second day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety seven and of the Sovereignty and Independence of the United States the Twenty first.

Go Washington

John Barry's Commission as Commander of the *United States.*

From the original at the Naval Academy, Annapolis.

Digitized by Google

wright, bent the flag to the halliards, and, with the help of another man, hoisted her to the mizzen-truck. Captain Nicholson swore like a pirate, it is said, but the flag was up and he would not haul it down again.

Later a dozen smaller ships were ordered built or purchased, besides galleys, schooners, and brigs. And then came a time when it was absolutely necessary to use them. The Revolution was on in France, and the European powers, with England in the lead, were trying to crush the new republic. In fighting back, the French cruisers had played havoc with American ships carrying legitimate goods to European ports—had captured and condemned many American merchantmen laden with American products not contraband of war, simply because those ships were *en route* to ports of nations at war with France. So retaliation became absolutely necessary, disagreeable as it might be to fight a former ally.

It should be noted here that the United States government did not actually declare war against France, but on July 7, 1798, all treaties in existence between the governments were declared abrogated, and meantime, on May 28, 1798, the American cruisers were authorized "to capture any French vessel found near the coast preying upon American commerce." It was under the act of May 28,

Digitized by Google

1798, as strengthened by that of July 7th of the same year, that the American ships went hunting the Frenchmen. But while there was an actual state of war on the ocean, there was never a time when the American State Department was not striving to negotiate a permanent peace with the discordant elements that, in those days of the French Revolution, ruled at Paris.

When hostilities began the American navy had in all twenty-two ships, mounting 456 guns and carrying 3,484 men, ready for battle; they were made ready before the end of the year.

As originally organized in the war for freedom, the American navy had held but a few puny merchantmen—thin-walled, crank, and slow. But now, though still comparatively few in number, the ships of the nation were "fore and fit," and, better yet, they were manned by men who had smelled the sulphurous breath of an enemy's guns. Officers and men from the old cruisers and privateers came forward to volunteer in such numbers that a ship's complement was filled in some cases in half a day. Meantime some new blood, the sons of the officers and seamen of the other war, and others, too, came, eager to take the chances of war, and some were accepted.

Even before the treaties were abrogated

Digitized by Google

two ships were sent to sea—the *Constellation*, under Capt. Thomas Truxton, who had made fame as a privateer, and the *Delaware*, under Stephen Decatur, Sr., father of the Decatur who made fame later on. The French ship *Croyable*, of fourteen guns, was found off the Delaware. She had taken several American ships, so she was sent into Philadelphia, and not long afterward came out again under the American flag, and bearing the appropriate name *Retaliation*. She was commanded by William Bainbridge, an able officer. But luck was not with her.

Early on the morning of November 20, 1798, while cruising with the *Montezuma* and the *Norfolk*, two small fleets were seen. The *Retaliation* went looking at one fleet and the other two at the other. When too near for comfort the *Retaliation* found she had two French frigates before her, and one, the *Insurgent*, of thirty-six guns, quickly overhauled her when she strove to fly.

Captain Bainbridge, after surrendering, was taken on board the second Frenchman, the *Volontaire*. Her captain refused to accept his sword, and after the proper civilities of the occasion he was allowed to go to the topgallant forecastle with the other officers to watch the *Insurgent* chasing the *Montezuma* and *Norfolk*. It was a mighty cheering spectacle to

Digitized by Google

the French, for the *Insurgent*, with her great spread of canvas bellying to the wind, was overhauling the Yankees hand over fist. But just when the *Insurgent* was expected to open fire Captain St. Laurent of the *Volontaire* turned to Bainbridge and said :

"Pray, sir, what is the force of those vessels ?"

"The ship carries twenty-eight twelve-pounders and the brig twenty nine-pounders," replied Bainbridge in a matter-of-fact way.

That was double their real weight of metal, and it was a weight that outmatched the *Insurgent*. Greatly alarmed, Captain St. Laurent, who was the senior French officer, ordered the *Insurgent* recalled.

When she got back within hail her captain shouted :

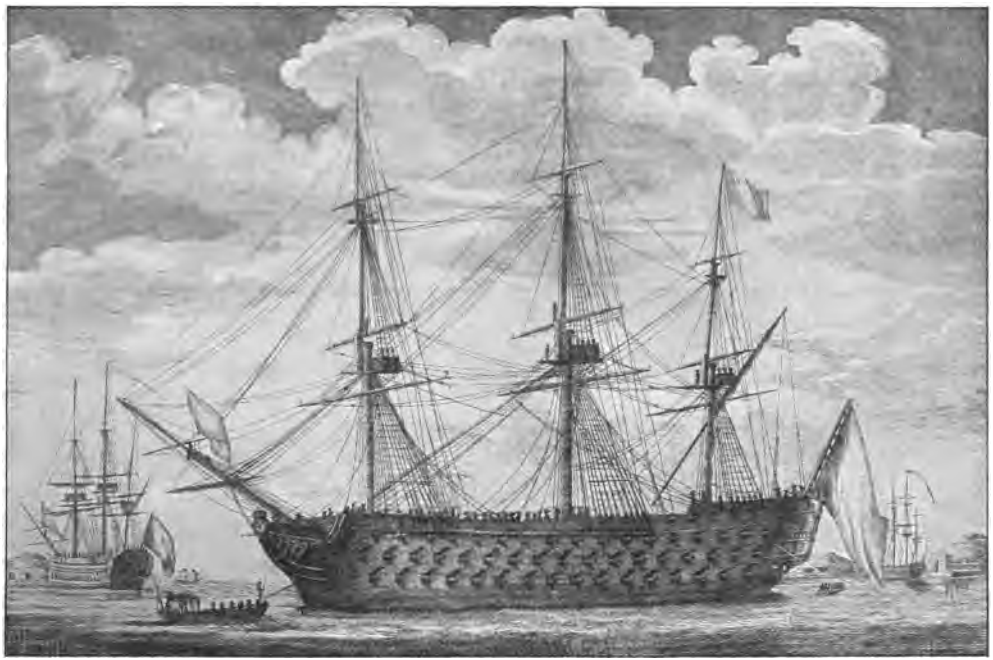
"Sir, if it had not been for your signal I should have had those vessels in ten minutes more."

"Citizen Captain, you do not know, sir, what vessels you were chasing. Your ship is not able to contend with a force of twenty-eight twelve-pounders and twenty nine-pounders," said Captain St. Laurent.

At that the *Insurgent's* captain chopped the air violently with his hands and replied :

"Sir, they have nothing heavier than *sixes*, and do you suppose that this ship could have anything to fear from such guns ?"

Digitized by Google



A French Vessel of 118 Guns, a Century Ago.

From an engraving by Canali.

Digitized by Google

"Did you not say, sir," demanded St. Laurent, turning on Bainbridge, "that the ship carried twenty-eight twelve-pounders and the brig twenty nine-pounders?"

"Yes, sir," replied Bainbridge, cheerfully, "and if I had thought at that moment that I could have saved the ships, by telling you that they carried twenty-four-pounders, I would have done so."

Three months later the fighting captain of the *Insurgent* (his name was Barreaut) had an opportunity to show his metal, and it is fair to say that he took advantage of it nobly.

At noon on February 9, 1799, while the *Constellation*, Captain Truxton, was cruising between Nevis and St. Kitts at the northeast corner of the Caribbean Sea, the lookout discovered a sail to leeward. There was a fresh breeze from the northeast, and squaring away before it, the *Constellation* spread studding-sails, and with the white foam roaring away from the bow and a swirling wake dragging astern, she went swooping down to reconnoitre. But no sooner had sail been spread than a black squall came down with the wind, and all hands had to turn to, as if for life, to shorten sail.

There were lively lads aloft on the Yankee ships of those days, for the crews, down to the powder monkeys, were inspired by a sense of

Digitized by Google

honor. They stripped the *Constellation* in time to save her spars, but the other ship lost her main-topmast, and when the squall had passed, it was seen that she had changed her course, hoping to reach port at St. Eustatius.

But the *Constellation* was soon upon her. She hoisted American colors, but could not answer a private signal, and a little later sent up the French flag and fired a gun in defiance.

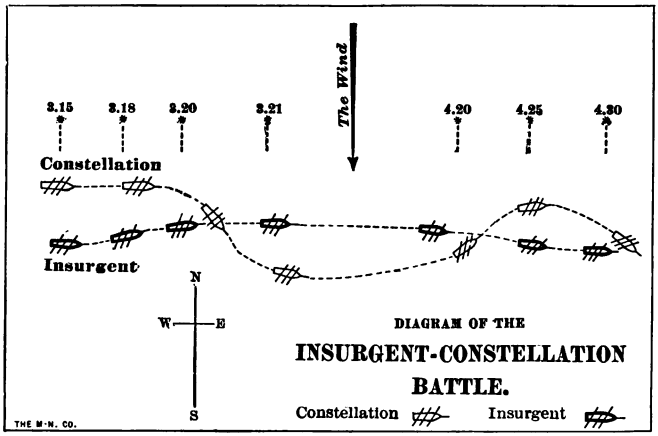
Later still (it was at 3.15 o'clock), when the *Constellation*, with her canvas above the topsails furled, came bowling down, the enemy hailed, but no reply was made. Captain Truxton was not yet ready, but when he had arrived within ten yards just off the enemy's weather quarter and the hail was repeated, Captain Truxton answered with a full broadside.

The fire was instantly returned, and then the enemy shoved his helm hard down, intending to luff up yardarm to yardarm and board the *Constellation.* In that move lay his only hope for victory, for he carried a hundred men more than the *Constellation.* But Captain Truxton was not to be caught. The *Constellation* being unhurt aloft, was able not only to steer clear of the crippled Frenchman, but to pass across his bows and rake him.

Then the *Constellation* dropped down on the starboard side and gave the Frenchman other broadsides, and following up the advantage of

Digitized by Google

superior sailing power, she once more crossed his bows and raked again. Again she passed alongside, firing as she went, and this was so effective that every eighteen-pounder in the main-deck battery of the Frenchman was dismounted, leaving him nothing but twelve-pounders for continuing the fight. Nevertheless, the Frenchman held fast his colors until



the *Constellation* once more drew ahead in a position to rake. The fight was then absolutely hopeless and the Frenchman struck.

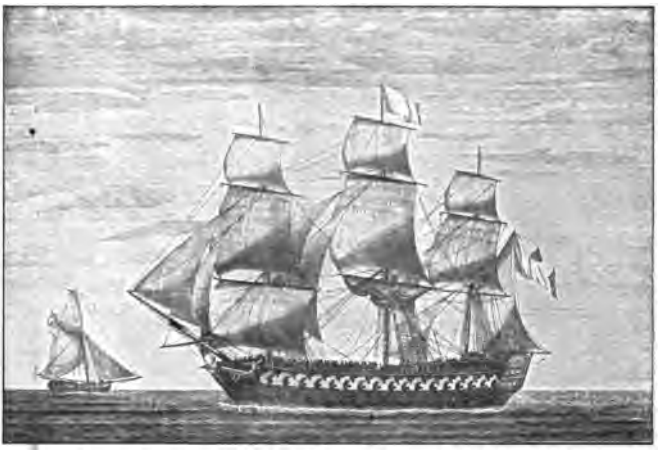
It was then learned that she was the *Insurgent*, Captain Barreaut.

The *Constellation* carried forty-eight guns, throwing 848 pounds of metal at one discharge, while the *Insurgent* carried forty guns, throwing 791 pounds of metal. The *Constellation's* crew

Digitized by Google

numbered 309, and the *Insurgent's* just 100 more. The battle lasted one hour and fourteen minutes. The French lost twenty-nine killed and forty-one wounded, the *Constellation* two killed and three wounded.

One gets a remarkable picture of the discipline on board the *Constellation* when reading,



A French Vessel of 120 Guns.

From an engraving by Orio.

in the report of the battle, that one of the two men killed was shot dead by Lieut. Andrew Sterrett for deserting his post at the first fire.

More interesting still is the story of the *Insurgent* during the three days after the battle. Lieut. John Rodgers and Midshipman David Porter, with eleven men, were sent on board to

Digitized by Google

take charge, and supervise the transfer of prisoners. While yet 173 of the French crew remained in her the two ships were separated by a West India hurricane. These thirteen Americans were left to face the gale and 173 of the enemy. Worse yet, all the hatch gratings, handcuffs, and shackles had been thrown overboard after striking colors. But Rodgers and Porter were the men for the occasion. They drove the prisoners below the hatches and placed one resolute, well-armed man at each hatchway with orders to kill any one who strove to get out. With the others they worked the ship for three days and two nights. They did not sleep or rest during that time, but they brought the ship into St. Kitts, where the *Constellation*, with an anxious crew, awaited them.

Still more to the honor of the flag was the fight between the *Constellation* and the *Vengeance* on Sunday night, February 2, 1800, for the Frenchman was in every way superior, and Captain Truxton compelled him to fight.

It was after a long chase that the *Constellation* drew up on the weather quarter of the enemy at a distance of fifty or sixty yards. The ship had already been cleared for action, and now the battle lanterns were lighted, the crew were ordered to preserve perfect silence, and Captain Truxton stepped to the lee rail and hailed. For a reply the enemy opened fire

Digitized by Google

with such guns as he could bring to bear, and some of the shot struck home. But Truxton was not yet in a position to suit him, and the *Constellation* forged ahead, with her crew standing in perfect silence at their stations, peering out at the red flash of the enemy's guns in the night, and shrinking back as the shot came in and here and there knocked a man dead or struggling across the deck. The wounded were instantly borne below, while the quartermasters sanded the blood, but no man spoke a word.

As the time passed, the strain upon them became greater. The Captain noticed that the men were flinching more and more, and sternly ordered them to stand to their posts until they got the word, and then to aim at the hull and fire deliberately, but to load swiftly. And the men obeyed that order.

Reaching the vantage point where every gun would bear, the order to fire was given, and echoing from the crash of the balls in the enemy's hull came such shrieks and cries as told of the havoc wrought there.

Thereafter until 12.30 o'clock that night the crew of the *Constellation* loaded as quickly as possible and fired as deliberately as if but practising with the battery at a target. So swift was their work that the guns got heated, and men crawled out the ports and dipped up water

Digitized by Google

with buckets to cool them off. But at midnight the fire of the enemy, that had been slacking away, died out entirely. The victory seemed won—it was, in fact, won over and again, for the French flag had been lowered twice during the fight (some historians say three times), but the *Constellation* people did not see it because of the smoke, and, under the circumstances, the Frenchmen felt compelled

Medal Awarded to Thomas Truxton.

to fight on. But when they could fight no more and victory was assured for the American flag, the captain of the *Constellation* found that her main standing rigging had been wholly shot away. He called all hands to send up preventers, but before the work could be done the mast fell, carrying Midshipman James Jarvis and several men overboard, all but one of whom were lost. Jarvis might have escaped before the mast went, but chose to remain at his post and face death.

Digitized by Google

LETTER FROM EX-PRESIDENT ADAMS TO COMMODORE TRUXTON.

QUINCY, MASS., November 30th, 1802.

DEAR SIR—I have many apologies to make for omitting so long to acknowledge the receipt of your obliging favour of the 10th of July. The copy you have done me the honour to present to me of the Medal voted by Congress, and executed according to my directions to the Secretary of the Navy, I accept with great pleasure, not only from a personal regard to the giver, but because I esteem every laurel conferred upon you for the glorious action of the first of March, 1800, as an honour done to our beloved country. From both of these motives I have been highly gratified with the honour the gentlemen of Lloyd's Coffee House have done themselves, in the handsome acknowledgment they have made of their obligations to you.

I regret that the artist had not completed the Medal in season, that I might have had the satisfaction of presenting it to an officer who had so greatly deserved it; and I lament still more that I had not the power of promoting merit to its just rank in the Navy—that of an Admiral.

The counsel which Themistocles gave to Athens, Pompey to Rome, Cromwell to England, De Witt to Holland, and Colbert to France, I have always given, and shall continue to give to my countrymen—that, as the great questions of commerce and power between Nations and Empires must be decided by a military marine, and as at and peace are determined at sea, all reasonable encouragement should be given to a Navy. The Trident of Neptune is the sceptre of the world.

With sincere esteem and affection, I have the honour to be, sir, your friend and servant,

JOHN ADAMS.

To Commodore TRUXTON.

Digitized by Google

A Representation of the Medal presented by the United States to THOMAS TRUXTUN ESQUIRE, and a copy of the Resolution of Congress. The lower circle is the Obverse side of the Medal.

Resolved, by the Senate and house of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled. That the President of the United States be requested to present to Captain Thomas Truxtun a Golden Medal, emblematical of the late action between the United States Frigate Constellation of thirty eight Guns, and the French Ship of war La Vengeance of fifty four Guns. In testimony of the high sense entertained by Congress of his Gallantry and good conduct in the above engagement, wherein an example was exhibited by the Captain, Officers, Sailors and Marines, honourable to the American name and instructive to our rising Navy.

And it is further Resolved, that the conduct of James Jarvis a Midshipman in said Frigate, who ultimately received certain death, to an abandonment of his post, is deserving of the highest praise, and that the loss of so promising an Officer is a subject of national regret.

Theodore Sedgwick.
Speaker of the house of Representatives.
Thomas Jefferson.
Vice President of the United States and President of the Senate.
Approved March 24th 1801. *John Adams.*

Digitized by Google

Having lost her mainmast, the *Constellation* was so badly crippled that the enemy slipped away in the night to Curaçao. She was the *Vengeance*, Capt. A. M. Pitot. She carried fifty-two guns, throwing 1,115 pounds of shot, while the *Constellation* at this time carried fifty guns, throwing 826 pounds of shot. The crew of the *Vengeance* numbered 330 to 310 on the *Constellation*. She lost fifty killed and 110 wounded, while the *Constellation* lost fourteen killed and twenty-five wounded. Her ability to escape was hard luck for the Yankees, for she was carrying a very valuable cargo, including a lot of specie.

If there is any one feature of this battle better worth remembering than any other it is the escape of the *Vengeance* after she was twice whipped—her escape through continuing the fight. For it proves, as John Paul Jones proved in the *Bonhomme Richard*, that a ship is never hopelessly defeated until she is sunk or wholly disabled.

Another interesting battle was that between the *Boston*, Capt. John Little, and the *Berceau*, Capt. André Senez, who was, during the American Revolution, a midshipman under Count D'Estaing in the operations that enabled Washington to complete the capture of Cornwallis. The *Boston* was a larger ship, with more men and more and heavier guns than the

Digitized by Google

enemy, but when she ranged up within ten yards of the *Berceau* and Captain Little demanded that she surrender, the valiant Senez replied "Never!" This was at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon of October 12, 1800. The *Boston* opened fire, and with cries of "Vive la Republique!" the Frenchmen replied, and so effective was their fire and so determined was their commander that the battle raged for twenty-two hours, save for the intermissions during which the *Boston* had to haul off and repair rigging. But at 2 P.M. of the 13th the *Berceau* was practically shot to pieces and she had to surrender.

The dash of Lieut. Isaac Hull, when he cut the valuable privateer *Sandwich* out of Puerto Plato, was characteristic of the man who distinguished himself in later years. The privateer was lying in position to rake anything entering port, and she was protected by a good shore battery. But filling the Yankee sloop *Sally* with seamen and marines from the *Constitution* (Hull was then her first lieutenant), he entered the harbor at night, sent the marines ashore, where they spiked the fort guns, while he with his sailors boarded and carried the privateer and sailed her out of port and sent her home. But though a brave, it proved to have been an illegal capture, and full restitution was made to the owners.

Digitized by Google

The adventures of the twelve-gun schooner *Enterprise*, Lieutenant Shaw—notably that when she fought the letter of marque *Seine* that would not surrender until twenty-four had been killed and disabled out of a crew of fifty-four—were of the most stirring character. In six months she captured eight Frenchmen and recaptured four American ships the French had taken. The *Experiment*, Lieut. William Maley, was handled in like fashion. Both vessels often met and whipped superior forces, but space is lacking to give the story of their deeds.

This high-seas war with France began on May 28, 1798. It came to an end when, on February 3, 1801, a treaty of peace was ratified by the American Senate. Nearly three years had passed away. By it peace was assured for the future, and as for the past, all government vessels captured on either side were to be restored. By this provision the Americans returned the *Berceau*, the *Vengeance*, and a smaller cruiser. The *Insurgent* was lost at sea. Seventy-six French ships, in addition, such as privateers and armed merchantmen, carrying together 500 guns, had been captured, and these were retained. No American warship was captured by the French except the *Retaliation*, which was originally taken from them.

The patriotic American does not care to dwell on this trouble with a people that had

Digitized by Google

"The *Sally* Attacked by a Sea-Serpent off the Shore of Long Island."

From a French engraving.

Digitized by Google

rendered such great aid when the nation was struggling for life against the oppressor. The significant features of such conflicts as took place were found in the efficiency and good discipline of the crews of the American ships and the development of an *esprit de corps* unknown during the Revolution. The pride and dignity of the new nation were stirring the blood of its naval seamen.

A French Cutter of 16 Guns.

From an engraving by Merlo.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII

WAR WITH BARBARY PIRATES

A SQUADRON UNDER RICHARD DALE SENT TO THE MEDITERRANEAN —THE DEY OF ALGIERS BECAME FRIENDLY, BUT THE BASHAW OF TRIPOLI SHOWED FIGHT—FIERCE BATTLE BETWEEN THE SCHOONER *ENTERPRISE* AND THE TREACHEROUS CREW OF THE POLACRE *TRIPOLI*— SLAUGHTER OF THE PIRATES — TRIPOLI BLOCKADED—GROUNDING AND LOSS OF THE *PHILADELPHIA*.

THE story of the first conflict with the pirates of the Mediterranean Sea follows that of the small war with France. It was a conflict made necessary, as already explained, because, in the supposed interests of her trade, a civilized nation sicked on the Barbary whelps to tear the peaceful passer-by. Not only did the British agent negotiate a treaty by which the pirates would be turned loose into the Atlantic, especially to prey on American commerce; a British subject named Lisle was admiral of the Tripolitan fleet when the Bashaw of Tripoli, seeing the success of the Dey of Algiers in levying blackmail on the United States, declared war against us.

On May 20, 1801, the Secretary of the Navy

Digitized by Google

Benjamin Stoddert.

From a painting at the Navy Department, Washington.

(Congress had established a Navy Department on April 30, 1798, with Benjamin Stoddert as Secretary) ordered a "squadron of observation" to the Mediterranean. Capt. Richard Dale was placed in command, and it consisted of the

Digitized by Google

President, Capt. James Barron; the *Philadelphia*, Capt. Samuel Barron; the *Essex*, Capt. William Bainbridge; and the twelve-gun schooner *Enterprise*, that had done such effective work against the French in the West Indies. She was now under Lieut. Andrew Sterrett, the officer who shot a sailor on the *Constellation* for leaving a gun in time of battle. Under Sterrett was David Porter, who had shown his metal on the captured *Insurgent* and elsewhere.

When this fleet appeared off Algiers the Dey found his wrath, which presents had not appeased, suddenly changed to effusive friendship for the Americans, but the Bashaw of Tripoli was not so easily awed. However, it was not until August 1st that a fight occurred. On that day, while cruising off Malta, the *Enterprise* fell in with the war polacre *Tripoli*, carrying fourteen guns and eighty men. By no means a cheap enemy at any time, she eventually proved a most treacherous one. After the battle had raged for two hours at point-blank range, the *Tripoli's* flag was lowered. Lieutenant Porter put off in a boat to take possession, while the crew of the *Enterprise* in great part turned to repairing damages to their rigging. Thereat the corsairs opened a murderous fire and hoisted the red flag again. The men of the *Enterprise* quickly returned to their

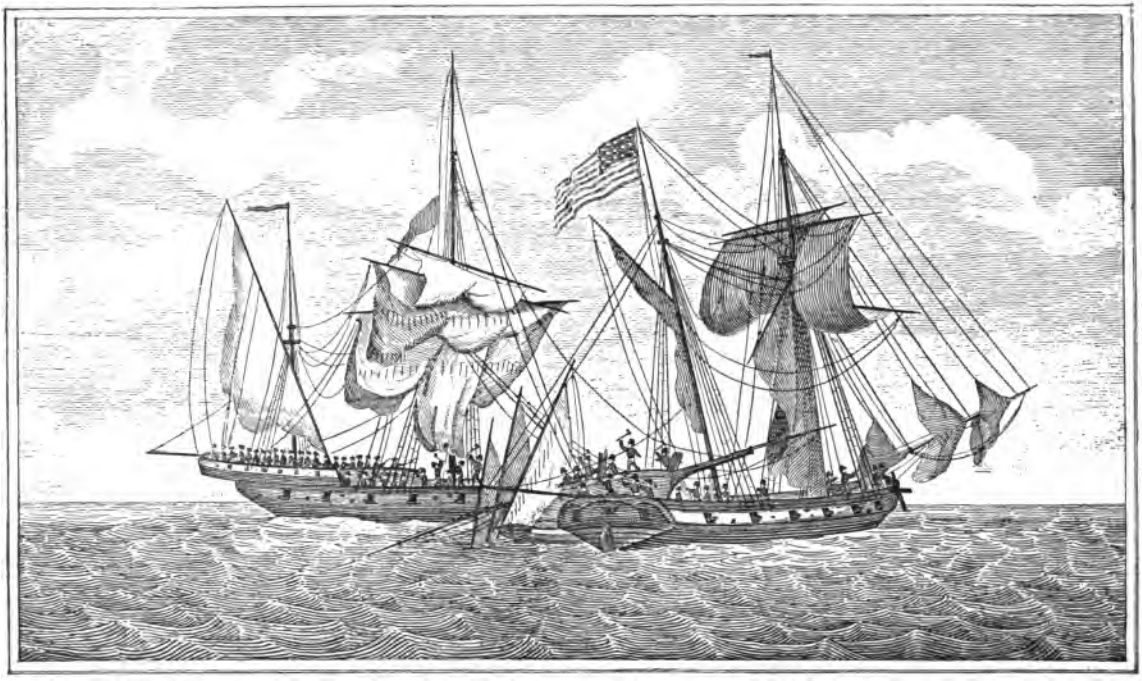
Digitized by Google

guns, and after a fierce conflict the corsairs, seeing that in fair fight they were worsted, once more hauled down their flag in order to catch the Yankees somewhat off guard. The ruse succeeded again, and Porter was on his way to take possession, when the corsairs renewed battle more vigorously than ever.

"Sink the damned, treacherous creatures to the bottom!" said Sterrett. Exasperated by the treachery they had seen, the crew started in to obey the order with a will, and the corsair captain saw his fate before him. Not only did he then haul down his flag, but he brought it to the gangway, and throwing it into the sea, he bowed his head to the deck and begged for quarter. Out of eighty men the corsair had lost twenty killed and twenty-eight wounded. The *Enterprise* did not lose a man. Congress gave Sterrett a sword and every other member of the crew a month's pay because of "the aforesaid heroic action." When the commander of the corsair reached Tripoli he was paraded through the streets on a donkey and bastinadoed for surrendering.

Following—though, of course, not because of —this action a good many changes were made in the American squadron—changes such as increasing its force and putting in new commanders two or three times; but eventually it appeared that, although here was a good squad-

Digitized by Google

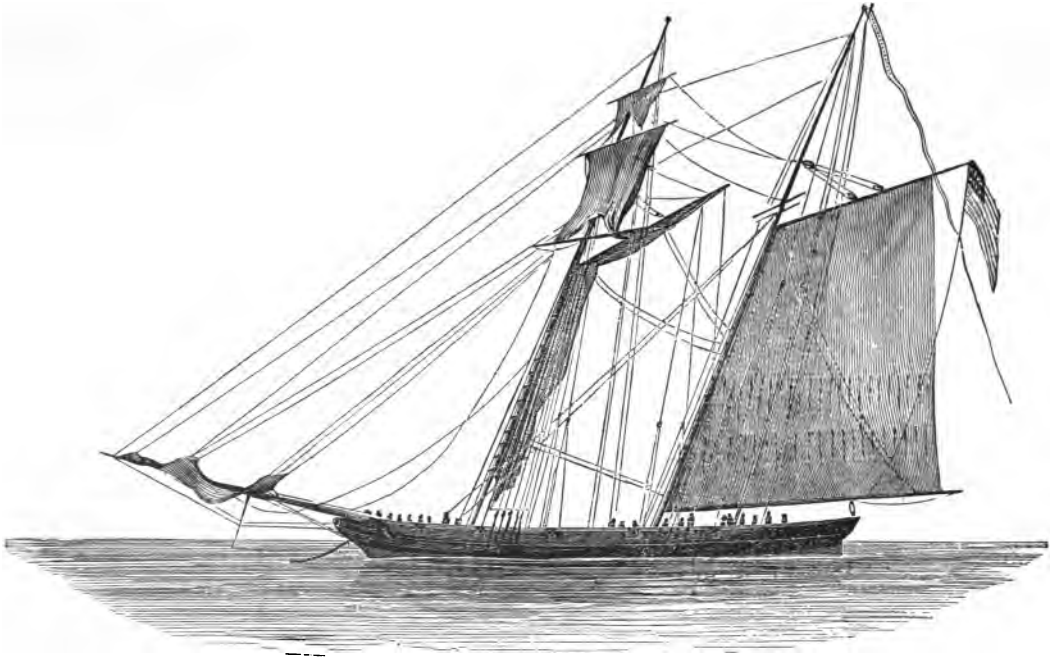


"Captain Sterrett in the *Enterprise*, Paying Tribute to *Tripoli*."

From an old wood cut.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



A Schooner-of-war, Like the *Enterprise.*

From a wood-cut in the "Kedge Anchor."

Digitized by Google

ron for open-sea fighting, the Americans were not armed for battering down a city so well fortified as Tripoli, and the Bashaw refused to make a treaty. A weary blockade of the port followed. There were conflicts of small moment with gunboats that tried to steal away to sea, and even the land forces were bombarded at times. A party under Porter once landed and fired some gunboats that had been hauled

out on the beach, and on this occasion the Arabs fought by throwing handfuls of sand in the faces of the Americans, hoping to blind them.

Finally, the 31st of October, 1803, came on, and it was a memorable day in the history of the American navy. The frigate *Philadelphia*, Capt. William Bainbridge, that had been maintaining the blockade off Tripoli, had been blown away from her station by a furious gale, and, while returning during the morning of the

Digitized by Google

William Bainbridge.

From an engraving by Edwin.

31st, saw a corsair stealing into port. The Yankee brig *Vixen*, that had helped hold the station, was nowhere in sight, and the *Philadelphia* made sail in chase. There was a fine breeze blowing, and the *Philadelphia* gained rapidly, but the corsair hugged the coast, and

Digitized by Google

Captain Bainbridge found he was getting into shoal water. Had he been provided with accurate charts he would have seen he was in worse than shoaling waters, for he was running among reefs, the channels of which were well known to the corsairs.

By 11 o'clock, with only her topsails and courses set, the *Philadelphia* was bowling along at eight knots an hour. The bow guns were already throwing shot at the flying corsair and almost reaching him, while the walls of the city rose scarcely three miles away. The three men who were in the chains heaving the lead had called eight fathoms of water with drawling regularity for some time, when one man suddenly cried out seven fathoms, and fifteen seconds later another but six and a half.

Instantly the helm was thrown hard over and the ship came up to the wind, headed for the open sea, and then with a shock that threw many of her crew to the deck, she struck the reef. The bow rose six feet out of the water, while the cordage and masts creaked and groaned under the tremendous strain.

For a moment the crew looked about in silence, and then the voice of the captain was heard calling for lead-lines over the bow and stern. It was found that there was but twelve feet of water forward and seventeen aft. A boat was lowered and a party sent to sound

Digitized by Google

around the ship. They found that she had left the channel when the helm was put down. Thereat every sail was set aback; anchors and guns were thrown overboard forward or run aft to reduce the load at the bow. Even the foremast was cut away, but all to no purpose. She was hard and fast ashore.

Meantime the enemy's gunboats had come out and opened fire on the grounded frigate. The Americans replied with such few guns as could be brought to bear, but eventually the tide ebbed, and the *Philadelphia* keeled over until nothing could be done in her defence. So the magazine was flooded, the pumps were disabled, holes were bored through her bottom, and at 5 o'clock her flag was hauled down.

For some time the Tripolitans held aloof, fearing the sort of treachery they were accustomed to among themselves, but as night fell they boarded and plundered everything and everybody in sight. Even the clothing was stripped from many of the crew.

In all, 315 men surrendered. Among the officers was Lieutenant Porter, already mentioned; Jacob Jones, James Biddle, and James Renshaw, who, though now prisoners, were to help make history in notable fashion in another war to come.

Two days later a strong wind from the north piled the water of the Mediterranean high on

Digitized by Google

the reef. The stern of the *Philadelphia* floated, anchors and cables were put out astern, and having stopped up the holes the Americans had bored, and having brought a strain on the cables, the corsairs hauled her off, and she was towed to an anchorage under the Bashaw's castle. And more than that, the Tripolitans succeeded in getting up and replacing the guns, anchors, and most of the shot that had been thrown overboard to lighten her.

That Bainbridge was eventually honorably acquitted when tried by court-martial for losing his ship, scarcely need be said.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV

DECATUR AND THE *PHILADELPHIA*

STORY OF THE BRAVE MEN WHO DISGUISED A KETCH AS A MERCHANTMAN AND SAILED INTO THE HARBOR OF TRIPOLI BY NIGHT, DREW UP ALONGSIDE THE CAPTURED *PHILADELPHIA*, AND THEN, TO THE ORDER "BOARDERS AWAY!" CLIMBED OVER THE RAIL AND THROUGH THE PORTS, AND WITH CUTLASS AND PIKE DROVE THE PIRATES INTO THE SEA OR TO A WORSE FATE—"THE MOST BOLD AND DARING ACT OF THE AGE."

WITH 315 American prisoners, including twenty-two officers, to hold for ransom, and with a swift and most substantial thirty-six-gun frigate added to his fleet, the Bashaw of Tripoli had gained a decided advantage over the Americans. He was so pleased over it that on a festival day that followed the accident, he brought the officers before him where his court was assembled in gala attire and, after a proper greeting, the Americans were liberally sprinkled with ottar of roses and other perfumes and were served with coffee and sherbet. Later, however, they were confined in filthy dungeons and otherwise ill treated. But, in spite of dungeons, through the aid of Mr. N. C. Nissen,

Digitized by Google

the Danish consul at Tripoli, who was unremitting in kind attentions to the Americans, Bainbridge was able to communicate with the American fleet, and on December 5, 1803, he sent a letter, written with lime juice (which becomes legible when heated), in which he proposed that the *Philadelphia* be destroyed as she lay at anchor by the Americans, who might come into the harbor at night in a schooner, and, after firing her, get away again. The suggestion was adopted, and it was carried out in a fashion that made the name of Decatur famous in the annals of the American navy.

At this time Stephen Decatur, Jr., was a lieutenant of the navy and in command of the famous schooner *Enterprise*. On December 23, 1803, he fell in with a Tripolitan ketch named the *Mastico*, that was carrying a lot of female slaves to the Sultan of Turkey, and very quickly captured her. This prize he carried to Syracuse, where the American fleet, under Capt. Edward Preble, was at anchor.

It is worth recalling here that Capt. Edward Preble, who was now in command of the *Constitution*, had, as a boy of fourteen years, been driven from his home at Portland (Falmouth), Maine, when that town was destroyed by the infamous Mowat at the beginning of the war of the Revolution.

At Syracuse the project of destroying the

Digitized by Google

Philadelphia by means of a small vessel well manned was mentioned to Decatur. He eagerly asked to be allowed to undertake the work with his schooner, the *Enterprise*, but

Stephen Decatur.

From an engraving by Osborn of the portrait by White.

the matter was not at once decided on. Later Lieut. Charles Stewart, who commanded the brig *Siren*, asked for the place, but Preble had decided meantime that Decatur should do it

Digitized by Google

and that the captured ketch *Mastico* should be employed because she was of a rig that could more easily enter the harbor of Tripoli without attracting attention.

Accordingly, the ketch was taken into the service as a tender and a picked crew of sixty-two volunteers put on board, with a faithful Malta man for pilot. In addition to these, there were a dozen young officers from the *Enterprise* and from the flagship *Constitution*, among whom were two midshipmen of whom the world was to hear later on—James Lawrence and Thomas Macdonough. Macdonough was then but twenty years old, while Lawrence was but sixteen. Decatur himself was only twenty-four.

Having everything in readiness, the *Mastico* sailed on February 9, 1804, for Tripoli, with the brig *Siren* in company to lie in wait off the harbor and pick up the crew of the *Mastico* should they be obliged to take to the small boats at any time.

Running across to Tripoli, the expedition arrived by night, but a furious gale defeated the hope of success and all but swamped the *Mastico*. For six days she rolled to the waves, her crew in distress for lack of food and of any sleeping accommodations whatever, and because of the vermin the slaves had left behind. But on the 16th of February the

Digitized by Google

weather moderated to a breeze that would just serve their purpose, and they stood in for the harbor, overhauling their combustibles on the way and finding everything dry and fit.

When night drew on, the men were divided into five crews, of which three were to fire as many different parts of the ship, one was to hold her upper deck, and one to remain in and guard the ketch. Meantime seven more volunteers had been taken from the *Siren*. When night had fully come the little ketch parted from the brig, and at 9 o'clock was sailing into the harbor by the channel in which the *Philadelphia* had been lost.

All the crew but six well-disguised men were hidden below or stretched out on deck in the shadow of the bulwarks, as soon as the city's lights came well in view, and with a failing wind the ketch thereafter drifted toward the great hulk of the *Philadelphia*, which was soon brought plainly in view in the moonlight. Her ports were aglow with lights, and her crew were seen to be at least awake if not alert.

Drawing near at about 10 o'clock, the pilot, at Decatur's order, steered the ketch so as to foul the *Philadelphia's* rigging at the bowsprit. Then a sentinel hailed the ketch. The Malta pilot replied that the ketch had lost all her anchors during the gale and wished to make fast to the cables of the *Philadelphia* until others

Digitized by Google

could be procured on shore. Then an officer asked what brig was off shore, for he had seen the *Siren* in spite of precautions. The pilot replied that it was the English war-brig *Transfer*, which had been purchased at Malta for the Tripolitans and, fortunately, was due to arrive.

As the pilot talked, many of the Tripolitans gathered at the *Philadelphia's* rail and ports to peer over at the ketch. So when, at last, the chains at the *Philadelphia's* bow were almost within grasp the wind failed, and the next instant a cat's-paw caught the ketch aback; she began to drift toward the broadside of the big ship, where all these Tripolitans would have a fair view of her deck. It was a moment of great peril, but without the least flurry two of the disguised sailors got into a small boat and carried a line to a ring-bolt on the man-o'-war's bow. Then the disguised men on board the ketch began hauling in, while those lying in the shadow of the bulwarks, trusting to the depth of the shadow, lent their aid by hauling hand over fist as they lay there.

Meantime the Tripolitans had sent a small boat with a line by which they intended to swing the ketch astern of the *Philadelphia*, but the Yankees in the small boat, with great presence of mind, took it from them and carried

Digitized by Google

it to the ketch, "to save the gentlemen the trouble," as they explained in broken Maltese.

During all this time the pilot had been entertaining the Tripolitan officer with a high-colored description of the ketch's cargo—had really entertained him until the men hauling on the bow line had brought the ketch within ten yards of the big ship, when unhappily the tension on the line from the stern drew the ketch broadside on to the *Philadelphia*, where the eyes of the idle spectators could fall on the men who were lying on the ketch's deck eagerly hauling in on the bow line. One fair look was enough, and in an instant the ship was resounding with the cry,

"Americano! Americano!"

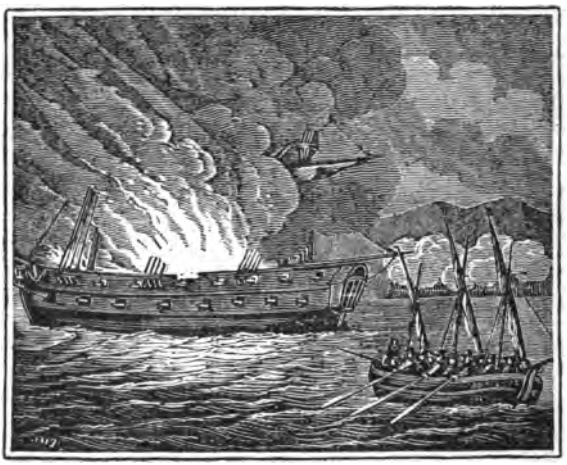
The moment for action had come. Springing to their feet, the Americans ran away with the line. A Tripolitan climbed over the *Philadelphia's* bows and cut the line loose, but the momentum already gained was great enough to land the ketch fair in place, where grapnels were thrown out, and with that Decatur cried, "Boarders away!" and sprang for the rail of the *Philadelphia*.

By the side of Decatur stood Midshipmen Morris and Laws. Laws, to be the first at the enemy, strove to get through a port, but his pistols caught and held him for a moment, while Decatur slipped just enough to give

Digitized by Google

Morris the honor of being first, and then came Decatur and all the rest with swinging cutlasses to clear the deck.

The Tripolitans had been fairly caught napping and, while never a word was spoken, the quarter-deck was cleaned in a trice. Then the



Burning of the Frigate *Philadelphia* by Decatur.

From an old wood cut.

Americans formed instantly in a line athwartship and charged silently forward. Whelmed by the fierce onslaught, the Tripolitans fled for life, and the rapid sound of bodies falling into the water alongside told whither many were fleeing. Others ran below, where some met death from the cutlasses and pikes of sailors who had climbed through the ports,

Digitized by Google

and others hid to meet a worse fate a brief time later.

So swift and thorough was the work of the American boarders that in ten minutes the last show of resistance was ended. And then a single rocket drew its line of flame high in air to tell the anxious friends without the bar that the *Philadelphia* was captured.

Even while the rocket mounted, the three crews that had been assigned to fire the ship were passing up the combustibles from the ketch, and never was a work of destruction more completely done than that which followed.

Midshipman Morris, he who had first reached the enemy, was in charge of the crew that fired the cockpit, the lowest attainable point in the ship. He did his work effectually, but so swiftly had those worked on the deck above him that when he followed his men up they barely had time to escape.

On reaching the upper deck the flames were found pouring from the portholes on both sides and flaring up to lap the tar-soaked shrouds and stays. Decatur was there, waiting for those from the cockpit. When they came he paused but a moment to see that the fire was effectually set, and then over the rail tumbled every man jack of the expedition, Decatur himself being the last to leave the burning ship. Indeed,

Digitized by Google

the ketch was then drifting clear, and he had to jump to reach her. He had been on board but twenty-five minutes, all told.

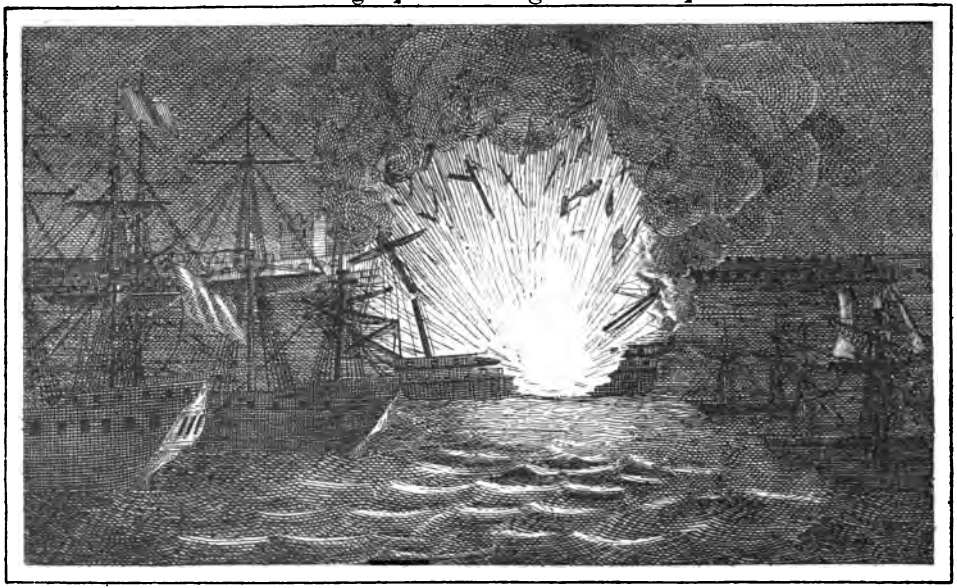
With poles and oars the Americans now strove to get away, but in some way the ketch swung around under the stern of the big ship with boom afoul, her sail flapping against the ship's sides, and, at the last, with the flames pouring through the ship's cabin windows into the cabin of the ketch, where all the ammunition of the expedition was stored, covered over with sail-cloth only. The peril was imminent, but it was averted when some one discovered that the forgotten line from the stern was still fast.

When that was cleared, and with their big oars, eight on a side, the crew began to sweep the ketch away toward the sea, the flames on the *Philadelphia* reached her tarred rigging at the rail. Running thence to the mast-head, they made such giant torches as illuminated the whole bay and exposed the fleeing ketch as if in the light of day.

The Tripolitans hastened to their guns. The ketch was still well within range, for the *Philadelphia* lay but a quarter of a mile from the fort, and in a few moments heavy shot were bounding and splashing over the smooth water on every side. But, whether from anger or mere excitement, the barbarian aim was bad,

Digitized by Google

The Blowing up of the Frigate Philadelphia.



The U. S. Frigate Philadelphia while blockading the harbour of Tripoli; strikes upon a rock. In this situation she surrenders. Com. Decatur obtains leave to attempt to recover, or destroy her, & with 70 volunteers sails for the ship. He reaches her & though moored under the Bashaw's Batteries & surrounded by his Navy, he with his men rush on board & boldly attack & conquer the crew of near 1000 men. Finding her recovery impossible, they set her on fire, which soon produces a terrible explosion, while Decatur & his crew safely escape from the harbour, amidst a tremendous fire from the enemies batteries & ships.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

and only one shot reached the little vessel, and that merely passed through a sail.

And then to the roar of the cannon on the beach was added that of the guns of the *Philadelphia*, which, heated by the fierce flames of deck and frames, began to discharge themselves. But not all of them were fired so. Only a few had been noted when the wondering spectators saw the great hull suddenly burst open, with huge sheets of flame spurting from between the parting timbers. The masts with their flaming rigging shot up a hundred and fifty feet into the air. All eyes were for a moment dazzled with the blazing light, and then came a shock and roar that made the earth and sea shudder. The fire had reached the well-filled magazine.

The waves from the explosion came out to rock the triumphant Americans in their little ketch, now rapidly reaching their shipmates and safety.

Not one American lost his life and but one was wounded. Of the Tripolitans more than twenty were certainly killed by the boarders, while many wounded ones jumped overboard, and many cowards sneaked to hiding places below, where the flames ended them.

To reward those who had participated in this feat, which Lord Nelson, it is said, called "the most bold and daring act of the age,"

Digitized by Google

Congress made Decatur a captain and gave him a sword, and to each of the others two months' pay. And, because of this adventure, the name of the ketch was changed to *Intrepid.*

To show his feelings in the matter, the Bashaw of Tripoli placed the American prisoners in a cold, damp apartment in the castle, where their only light was from an iron grating in the ceiling, and he did not release them from it until compelled to make peace.

Piece of the *Philadelphia's* Stern.

From the original piece at the Naval Institute, Annapolis.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV

HAND-TO-HAND WITH THE PIRATES

A FIGHT AGAINST ODDS OF THREE GUNBOATS TO ONE—DECATUR AND MACDONOUGH LEADING THE BOARDERS—COLD-BLOODED MURDER AND THE VENGEANCE THAT FOLLOWED—WHEN REUBEN JAMES WON FAME—ELEVEN AGAINST FORTY-THREE IN A HAND-TO-HAND STRUGGLE, AND THE REMARKABLE RESULT—THE HANDY *CONSTITUTION*—FIRED THEIR GUN AS THE BOAT SANK UNDER THEM—WHEN SOMERS AND HIS MATES WENT TO THEIR DEATH IN A FIRESHIP—END OF THE WAR WITH THE PIRATES.

AFTER the destruction of the *Philadelphia* the war against the Tripolitans was carried on with increased vigor. A number of gunboats, carrying one long heavy gun each, and two barges, carrying a big thirteen-inch brass mortar each, were "generously loaned us by his Sicilian majesty." With these and the force already in hand a number of attacks were made on the city of Tripoli by Captain Preble, who was still in command of the American forces. The first of these, and the most notable as a battle, took place on the afternoon of August 3, 1804. Six gunboats, in two divisions, were sent in to attack the enemy's fleet. Master Commandant Richard Somers, of whom a re-

Digitized by Google

Edward Preble

From an engraving by Kelly of the picture in Faneuil Hall, Boston.

Digitized by Google

markable story will be told further on, led one division, and young Stephen Decatur, now a captain, the other. Of the six gunboats only three succeeded in weathering the point and getting at the enemy; but one of these carried Stephen Decatur, and another Stephen's brother, Lieut. James Decatur. The Tripolitan fleet numbered nine gunboats, each at least as well manned and armed as any of the American boats, but the Yankees dashed at the head of the fleet with hearty cheers. Stephen Decatur's boat was the first to open the fire. Its long gun had been loaded with a thousand musket-balls in a bag, in lieu of the ordinary projectiles, and it was fired at point-blank range. A moment later the Yankee boat was beside the enemy, and Decatur led the way to her quarter-deck. The Tripolitans retreated forward, where a wide, open hatch protected them, after a fashion, from direct assault; but a narrow gangway was found on each side of the hatch—a gangway where men might advance in single file—and over these narrow paths the Yankees charged. Decatur was first on one side and Midshipman Thomas Macdonough on the other—the Macdonough who was to win still greater fame on Lake Champlain. It was a bloody but a brief fight, and the Tripolitans fled over the rail, save eight who tumbled down the hatch and were made prisoners.

Digitized by Google

When an examination was made they found the Tripolitan captain dead, with fourteen bullets from the great gun through him.

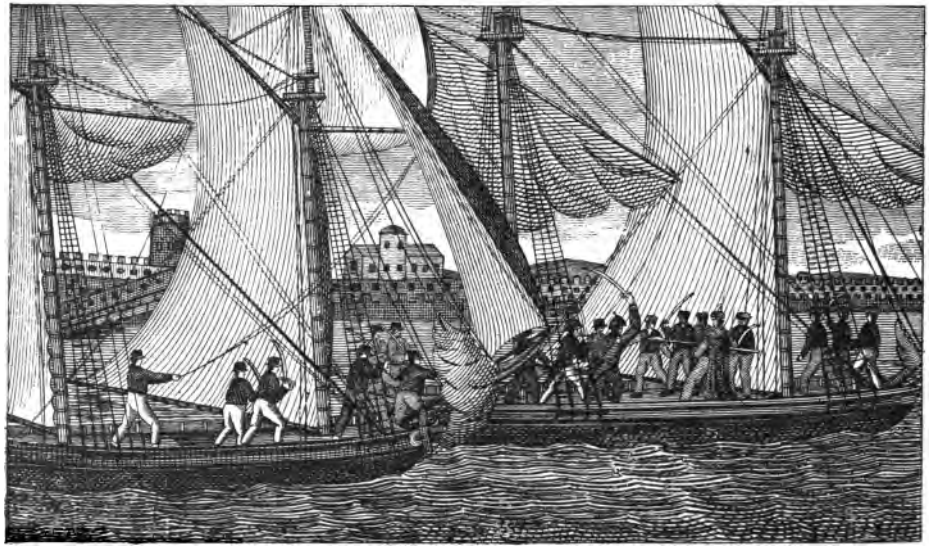
Meantime Lieut. James Decatur had, with equal ardor, attacked another of the Tripolitans, and her commander, seeing the great power of the Americans, determined to try to do by treachery what he could not hope to do open-handed. He hauled down his flag after the first fire had been received, and then waited the coming of Lieut. James Decatur to take possession — waited with a loaded pistol at hand. As Decatur stood at the rail ready to board and take possession, the Tripolitan shot him dead, the bullet passing through his head. As the Tripolitan had hoped, the Americans were thrown into confusion by the unexpected attack, and he was able to haul off.

But he did not escape. In some way Stephen Decatur heard that his brother had been murdered. He was towing his captured gunboat to a place of safety, but he cast her off, and, seconded by his crew, who were thoroughly aroused by the story, he went after the assassin.

A round of grapeshot and musketry was poured into the fleeing barbarian, and then Decatur led the boarders, and himself selected the captain for his own victim. A most desperate hand-to-hand fight followed, for the Tripolitan was a more powerful man than the

Digitized by Google

Decatur avenging the murder of his brother.



Com. Decatur whilst bearing a prize from the harbour, hears of the treacherous murder of his brother by a Turk; (the Turk having surrendered) in a moment changes his course, and with 10 men for his crew seeks his enemy–rushes on board–and after a desperate struggle, with numbers far superior, kills the Turk–captures his enemy's boat–& again retreats from the harbour.

Digitized by Google

American. Decatur lunged at him with a boarding pike. The Mussulman parried the blow, caught the weapon, and wrenching it away, lunged at Decatur. Decatur had drawn his sword, and with this he parried the thrust, but his sword broke short off at the hilt. The Tripolitan lunged again, and Decatur, although he parried the blow, was wounded in the chest and arm, and a moment later the two were clasped in a wrestling struggle for life.

At this another Mussulman aimed a blow at Decatur's head from behind. It was apparently all over with the gallant American, for no other American was within reach save one, a seaman, Reuben James, and both of his arms were disabled. But James leaped in, and with his head caught the blow aimed at Decatur.

And then the Tripolitan threw Decatur to the deck, and Yankees and Mussulmans thronged in and piled themselves over the two leaders.

As it happened, each of the leaders fell, with one arm free and one pinned by the men on top. The Tripolitan with his free arm drew a long knife, Decatur a pocket pistol. For a moment each felt the other's ribs to locate the heart, but Decatur was first by a fraction of a second, and his pistol-ball did faithful work, killing the Mussulman instantly.

Then the Americans cleared the enemy from

Digitized by Google

Reuben James Saving Decatur's Life.

From an engraving of the picture by Chappel.

over their captain, and when he reached his feet the victory was won, for the Mussulmans fled over the rail as usual. It is comforting to know that the brave Reuben James recovered from the wounds he had received, and lived to

Digitized by Google

serve the nation more than forty years. It was his boast that he was in "ten fights and as many skrimmedges," and it was his custom to celebrate the anniversary of each with enthusiasm. A jolly old tar was Reuben James.

Of equal bravery were the men on the third American gunboat. She was commanded by Sailing Master John Trippe and Midshipman John D. Henley. Ranging up beside the enemy, these two officers and nine men got on board of her, and then the two boats separated, leaving these eleven men to face the whole barbarian crew, with no chance of retreat and small hope of timely assistance.

But Trippe and Henley were just the men to lead such a forlorn hope. Pikes and swords in hand, the eleven charged the enemy, Trippe and Henley singling out the Tripolitan captain, knowing that victory was assured if they could cut him down. But he was a magnificent specimen of humanity, and it is said that he had sworn on the Koran to win victory or die.

Fighting with the energy born of fanaticism, he wounded Trippe no less than eleven times, and at last Trippe went down with one knee on the deck, but while in this position he caught the Tripolitan with breast unguarded and thrust him through with a pike. And that ended one of the most remarkable fights recorded in the annals of the navy. For Trippe

Digitized by Google

and his ten men killed fourteen of the Tripolitans, and made the remainder, twenty-two in number, prisoners. The number of the enemy wounded was only seven. The Americans struck to kill in that fight. Besides Trippe, a boatswain's mate and two marines were wounded, but none was killed among the Americans.

John Trippe.

After a French engraving.

Meantime Master Commandant Somers, finding he could not sail his boat inside of the reef by the route Decatur had taken, went down wind to the opposite end of the reef, and for a time faced five of the enemy's boats. The other American gunboats came in later, and the enemy was driven off. The *Constitution* (the flagship) and the smaller vessels of the American fleet sailed close under the enemy's batteries, silencing them over and again, and bombarding the city. That the batteries were not permanently silenced was due to the fact that the Tripolitans had 25,000 soldiers within, and these remanned the guns of each battery as soon as the American ships ceased firing at it.

So well did the Americans show their power

Digitized by Google

here in hand-to-hand fights that thereafter the Tripolitans would never engage them in that way. And the manner in which the *Constitution* was handled must also be mentioned, for she was sailed boldly into the harbor, and there sail was taken in or made as if it were a mere exhibition of skill in a friendly port, while her guns were handled with the precision of peaceful target practice. The admiration of all foreigners was excited, but the time when American naval crews were to compel the respect of all foreign powers had not yet arrived.

In the subsequent attacks on the city, there were many incidents of interest to American readers. A heavy shot penetrated the castle one day where the American prisoners were confined. It covered Captain Bainbridge with the débris of the wall and snatched the clothes off the bed on which he was lying.

While one of the American gunboats was firing on a shore battery, a hot shot penetrated her magazine and she was blown up. At the moment of the explosion Midshipman Robert T. Spence and a gun's crew were loading the big gun on the bow. As it happened, the explosion did not injure either them or their gun, although it opened wide the bottom of the boat. And so it came to pass that, as the smoke cleared away, spectators saw Spence and his men still at work loading the gun. And not

Digitized by Google

The Battle of Tripoli, August 3, 1804.

From the painting by Corné, 1805, at the Naval Academy, Annapolis.

Digitized by Google

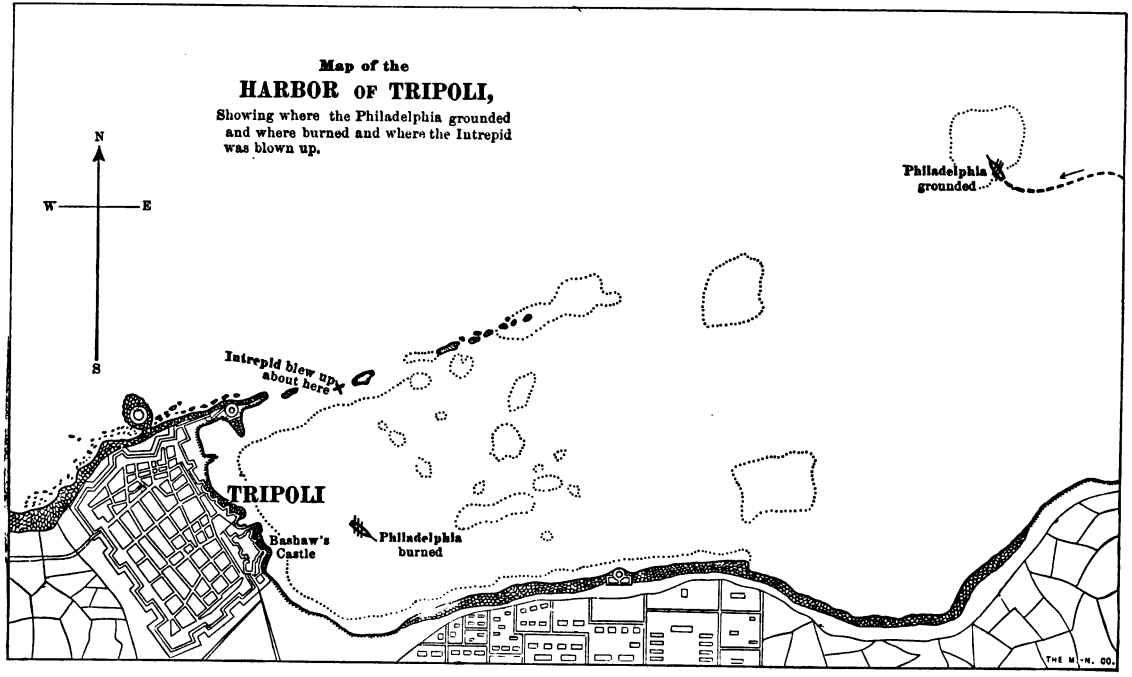
Digitized by Google

only did they complete their work; as the boat sank under them they gave three cheers for the flag, and fired their last shot at the enemy, with the rising water wetting their feet.

Spence was not able to swim, but he got hold of a big oar, and so kept afloat with eleven others until picked up, when he and the others saved turned to and continued the fight.

The story of the most stirring and the most unfortunate attack on the city remains to be told. Captain Preble, "desirous of annoying the enemy by all means," decided to send a fire-ship among their shipping. The ketch *Intrepid*, that had served so well in the attack upon the captured *Philadelphia*, was selected for the sacrifice. A hundred barrels of powder in bulk and 150 fixed shells and a lot of old iron were placed in a bin amidships, and from this a pipe led to a room well aft, where a huge mass of combustibles was placed. It was intended to handle the ketch as a blockade runner and so get her into the midst of the enemy's shipping. She was then to be fired in the after-room, and the blaze there, it was supposed, would be fierce enough to prevent the Tripolitans extinguishing it. Meantime a train regulated to burn fifteen minutes would be running through the pipe to the magazine. Two swift rowboats were placed on the ketch, and in these her crew hoped to escape to the

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

smaller vessels that would be in waiting to pick them up.

The glory which Decatur and his men had won in their attacks on the *Philadelphia* had inspired the whole force of the fleet, and volunteers a-plenty were eager to man the ketch. Of those who offered, Master Commandant Richard Somers was chosen to command, while Midshipman Henry Wadsworth was made second, with ten seamen for a crew. In addition to these was a stowaway—Midshipman Joseph Israel. He had pleaded in vain for permission to go, and so hid on board. He was discovered, but was then allowed to go.

Every man of the crew knew very well the great danger of the venture, and Somers and his officers declared they would not be taken alive. Somers, before starting, took off a ring he wore and, breaking it into three pieces, gave one to Decatur, another to Master Commandant Charles Stewart, his most intimate friends. He kept the third himself. The two pieces given away were to be preserved as mementoes if he failed to return. The seamen of the crew disposed of their effects as if facing certain death.

It was on the night of September 4, 1804, that the attempt was made. A fog lay low over the water, and a fair wind filled the sails as the ketch, at 8 o'clock, left the flagship and sailed away silently into the night.

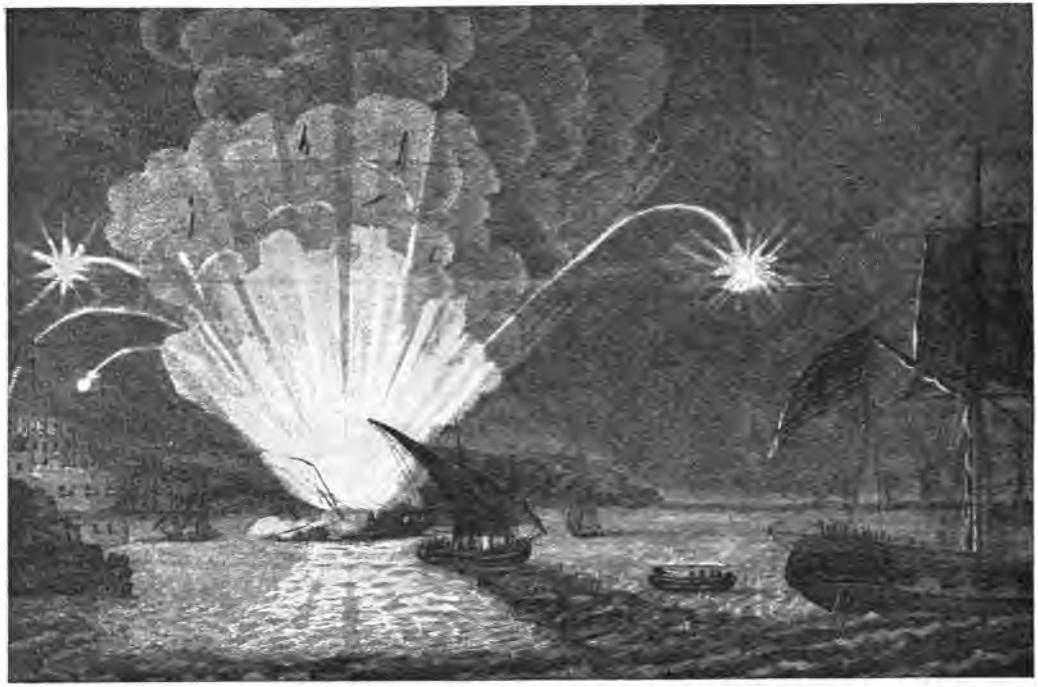
Digitized by Google

A little later the *Argus*, the *Vixen*, and the *Nautilus*, all small cruisers, stood over toward the channel in order to cover the retreat of the ketch, for three Tripolitan gunboats had anchored there during the afternoon and were likely to make trouble for the ketch's crew. The *Nautilus* led the way for the guarding fleet, and she held the ketch in view until so near the channel that there was danger that she (the *Nautilus*) would be discovered, when she hauled her wind to await the event of the expedition.

Her crew soon saw the ketch fade away in the night, but so intense was their interest that many climbed over the rail to get down with their ears to the water that they might hear the sooner any sound coming from her.

In the rigging of the *Nautilus*, not far above deck, Midshipman Ridgeley was able, with the aid of a powerful glass, to follow the ketch into the channel. He saw her glide as a shadow between the gunboats there. At this moment a signal gun was fired from the shore. It was followed by the rapid firing of every cannon on that side of the harbor. Immediately there was a commotion among the three gunboats in the channel, and at that the light of a lantern in the hands of one who ran was seen passing along the deck of the ketch.

Digitized by Google



The Explosion of the *Intrepid.*

From an old engraving.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

This light paused over the midship hatch to drop out of sight an instant later, and then a hell of flame burst up to the sky, where the light had disappeared.

A shock followed that made the ships beyond the bar quiver until tiny waves spread away over the smooth water. And with the shock came a roar that deafened. And then, as the echoes of the roar died away among the distant hills, the patter and splash of shells and splintered timbers were heard on every side, while cries as of fear and distress arose from the city—cries that were followed by absolute silence.

All night long the Americans cruised to and fro about the channel, firing guns and rockets at intervals, hoping against despair to find a survivor. When morning came to give a fair view of the harbor, one of the enemy's gunboats was missing, and the Tripolitans were hauling three others, badly shattered, out on the beach. The ketch and all who sailed in her—the "men, whose names ought to live in the recollection and affections of a grateful country, and whose conduct ought to be regarded as an example to future generations" —had been blown to pieces.

Richard Somers, finding that his venture was discovered, and the crew of a Tripolitan gunboat coming on board, had deliberately fired

Digitized by Google

the mine, and, Samson-like, had destroyed himself with the enemy.

Fragments of the wreck and a number of bodies of white men were picked up in the harbor. The bodies were viewed by Captain Bainbridge, but none was definitely recognized.

Other attacks on the city followed. The Congress gave Preble a gold medal, each of his officers and midshipmen a sword, and all others of the crew a month's pay because of their good work there. The force was increased by other ships until there were five frigates, a brig, three schooners, a sloop, and a dozen or so gunboats and bomb barges in the fleet, making the most powerful squadron that had ever assembled under the flag. For that day and place it was an impressive display of the sea power. In the meantime a formidable uprising had taken place in the Bashaw's dominions, and the capital of his chief province was captured by the leader of the revolt with the aid of the Americans. So the Bashaw became alarmed and eventually offered to deliver up all prisoners for a ransom of $60,000 and to agree never again to trouble American commerce. This offer was accepted, and peace followed. The fleet then sailed to Tunis, whose ruler, stimulated by the British consul-general, had expelled the American agent. To him terms of peace were dictated under the muzzles of the

Digitized by Google

Preble's Medal.

guns of the fleet. And that was a matter of wonder to the nations of Europe, for never had

Digitized by Google

such a thing been done before. So closes the story of the American navy's work during the period between the Revolution and the War of 1812.

As it appears in the perspective of a hundred years, that was in many ways a most important epoch. It was, first of all, the time in which the ruling policy of the American navy, as regards the construction of ships, was formed—the policy under which it was determined to build only as many ships as might be necessary to defend the nation and its commerce from aggressors, but each ship to be the most powerful possible for its size. Every device and model that seemed likely to add to the efficiency of these vessels was tried, regardless of expense. The eager enterprise of the new nation and the ships this enterprise set afloat excited endless derision from the British officers of that day. The *Constitution* was called "a pine box" by some Englishmen who inspected her. They had to learn by hard experience their error.

The foreign commerce of the nation, through the influence of this new fleet, was not only freed from the evils which the Mediterranean pirates had brought upon it, but also from those for which the French anarchists were responsible. Indeed, that commerce grew until the increase of the tariff collected from imports

Digitized by Google

amounted to several times the cost of the whole American navy.

But valuable as were these gains, they were, perhaps, together of less importance than was the effect of the deeds of the naval heroes upon the people of the new republic. In the war of the Revolution we had, indeed, won liberty, but we still dragged the slave-chains of colonists. Without having known what it was to be freemen we had established a government of and by the people and we found ourselves in unfamiliar quarters. We had placed ourselves, so to speak, on the quarter-deck without having mastered the art of navigation, and while quartered in the cabin, we had the manners of the forecastle and smelled of bilgewater. Our new uniforms did not fit us well, but there was no form of training that could so quickly swell the muscles until they would fill the garments of liberty as a righteous foreign war. The war with the Barbary pirates was of all wars most righteous. It stirred the indignation of the most sluggish patriot to read of the deeds of these black hounds of the sea, while the signal valor of those who fought under the American flag leavened the spirit of the whole nation. As the stories of the deeds of those who fought afloat for liberty had prepared the way for manning the new fleet which aggression

Digitized by Google

compelled us to build, so the stories of the deeds of the heroes of the new navy nerved the nation for the conflict that was already at hand. Small as were the numbers of the crews who carried the flag overseas in this epoch, it is safe to say that they, and they alone, strengthened the heart of the people until it was possible to resist the shock of 1812.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVI

WHY WE FOUGHT IN 1812

A STIRRING TALE OF THE OUTRAGES PERPETRATED ON AMERICAN CITIZENS BY THE PRESS-GANGS OF THE BRITISH NAVY—HORRORS OF LIFE ON SHIPS WHERE THE OFFICERS FOUND PLEASURE IN THE USE OF THE CAT—DOOMED TO SLAVERY FOR LIFE—IMPRESSED FROM THE *BALTIMORE*—A BRITISH SEAMAN'S JOKE AND ITS GHASTLY RESULT—THE BRITISH ADMIRALTY'S WAY OF DEALING WITH DELIBERATE MURDER IN AMERICAN WATERS—ASSAULT OF THE *LEOPARD* ON THE *CHESAPEAKE* TO COMPEL AMERICAN SEAMEN TO RETURN TO THE SLAVERY THEY HAD ESCAPED—BUILDING HARBOR-DEFENCE BOATS TO PROTECT AMERICAN SEAMEN FROM OUTRAGE ON THE HIGH SEAS—OTHER GOOD REASONS FOR GOING TO WAR.

THERE were many causes operating through weary years to force the American nation to declare war against the British in 1812, which the reader will recall readily, of course. Great Britain retained the frontier posts which she had agreed to surrender when the war of the Revolution came to an end. She used these posts as headquarters for Indian tribes, whose friendship she cultivated that she might use them to the injury of the United States. She even incited them to attack the American pioneers, and furnished them with guns and

Digitized by Google

scalping knives when night assaults on peaceful settlers were to be made. Although all Europe was submerged in a turmoil of blood, she turned aside from the great interests there to foment discord between the States of the American Union, seeking thereby to disrupt the nation in the hope that a part—the New England part, at that—would return to the colonial relationship. Remembering the prodigious growth of American shipping and the consequent complaints of her own shipowners, she used every means to harass American commerce. To detail all of the evils she heaped upon the decks of American ships is unnecessary, but the reader will remember that a time came when she ordered that every American ship carrying cargo to any part of Europe must call first at a port in England, land the cargo, pay duty on it, and then carry it away again, subject to such regulations as seemed most beneficial to her.

As the *Edinburgh Review* for November, 1812, said, "the spirit of animosity and unconciliating contempt pervaded the whole proceedings of the government" toward the Americans. And although "they are descended from our loins—they speak our language—they have adopted our laws—they retain our usages and manners—they read our books—they have copied our freedom—they rival our

Digitized by Google

courage; yet *they are less popular and less esteemed among us than the base and bigoted Portuguese, or the ferocious and ignorant Russians.*"

That the retention of the frontier posts, the inciting of the Indians to night attacks on the frontiersmen, and the interferences with American oversea trade were separately sufficient causes of war and, combined, more than sufficient, will not now be seriously disputed, if the advocate of peace will stop to consider what ought to be done were any one of these uncalled-for aggressions attempted now. And yet so great was the American antipathy to another war, so great was the American desire to hold a neutral position as to the wars of Europe, that neither the one nor the other nor all together were sufficient to nerve them to strike the blow. Still another and a stronger incentive was needed, if war was to be declared —a grievance that would appeal to the heart of the whole people. And not only was this incentive found; it was continually present and crying aloud for vengeance.

To fully appreciate this, the chief cause of the War of 1812 between the United States and England, one must first know well how the crews of the British naval ships of that day were recruited and what manner of life these crews led when in actual service. As to the manner of recruiting, the facts are, no doubt,

Digitized by Google

well known to almost every reader. Gangs of men, under the lead of petty officers, and commonly piloted by a crimp, were sent ashore in home ports by the captain who found his ship short-handed. These gangs went to the resorts of seamen in the port where the ship happened

"The Press-gang Impressing a Young Waterman on his Marriage Day."

From an English engraving, illustrating an old song.

to lie, and there took by force every English-speaking sailor they could find and carried him on board the warship. Failing to find a resource in the sailors' boarding-houses, they knocked down any able-bodied man encountered in the street, and he was then carried instantly to the ship. Failing in getting

Digitized by Google

enough men in this fashion—as, for instance, when the ship was in a foreign port or on the high seas—it was the custom, the every-day custom, to send the press-gang on board any ship where it was supposed that English-speaking sailors might be found, and there take and carry off all such sailors.

The life that the crews so recruited led cannot, of course, be described here in full detail. The reader will readily imagine that the officers who snatched a man away from his home without even the poor privilege of telling his wife and children of his fate would not show any great care for the feelings or comfort of the man when on board the ship. But any picture of the life there which an American, at the end of the nineteenth century, might base on the mere fact that sailors were kidnapped, would be wholly inadequate, for the reason that no American of these days, unacquainted with the facts, could imagine such a degraded state of slavery. That the crews were ill-fed; that they were worked to the limit of their endurance; that the pay was as nothing (it is on record that one kidnapped man received £14 2s. 6d. for serving two and a half years); that the kidnapped men were not allowed to go ashore and were not allowed to write letters to their families where any effort was likely to be made for their release—all these conditions

Digitized by Google

Another View of the "Young Waterman" and the Press-gang.

From an English engraving.

are, or were, a matter of course. It was in the matter of preserving what the officers called discipline—in keeping these unfortunate slaves in subjugation—that the real brutality of the British naval officers appeared. For the officers, who depended on clubs and manacles to

Digitized by Google

recruit their crews, made no appeal to them save through their fears—used nothing to enforce an order but the cat-o'-ninetails. One undenied description of the flogging of a man on a British man-o'-war—a man-o'-war well known later on in the annals of the American navy—shall serve as an illustration of the ordinary punishments inflicted there.

In the year 1811 the British frigate *Macedonian* was commanded by Capt. John S. Carden, and his executive officer was one David Hope. "It was a peculiar feature of the brutal punishment of flogging that officers and men who at first sickened and fainted at the sight of it gradually grew indifferent and in some instances acquired a craving for the bloody ordeal and took a fiendish delight in superintending it. David Hope was one of these. He took the exquisite delight of a connoisseur in the art of flogging, being especially fond of seeing the tender flesh of boys lacerated and torn." One day a midshipman on the *Macedonian* named Gale, "a rascally, unprincipled fellow," lost a handkerchief. A sailor found it on the deck, and as it was unmarked, kept it. Gale saw it in the sailor's possession, and the sailor was court-martialled, convicted of theft, and sentenced to be flogged through the fleet—to receive 300 lashes from the cat—and to serve one year in prison.

Digitized by Google

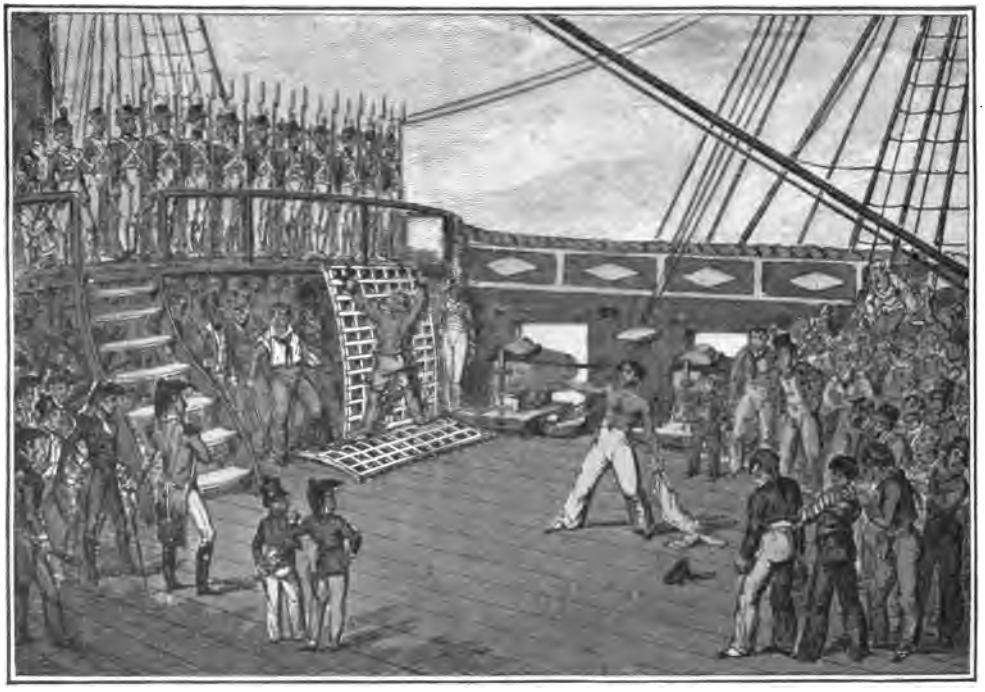
On the day appointed the *Macedonian's* launch was put into the water and rigged, under the supervision of this David Hope, with a frame on which the bare-backed sailor was lashed. A surgeon, to keep watch that the man was kept alive, boarded the launch with the boatswain and the boat's crew, and then all hands were called to man the rail and rigging, where all could view the torture.

This done, the lash was applied to the man's back until "the flesh resembled roasted meat burned nearly black before a scorching fire."

Then the launch was sent to another ship and to another and another, where fresh boatswains applied the lash anew to the raw back of the man, the doctor standing by and seeing that the man remained conscious to suffer the torment. When 220 blows had been given the doctor ordered the whipping stopped. The sailor begged to have the other eighty blows given that he might be done with it, but this was refused. He was carried back to the *Macedonian* and cared for until he had recovered his strength, when the remaining eighty were given to him, and then he was flung into prison.

Just before the War of 1812 a deserter from a British ship slipped on board the United States frigate *Essex*. When an officer with a gang came for him he was, of course, surren-

Digitized by Google



A Flogging Scene. ("The Point of Honor"—a Sailor about to be Flogged is Saved by a Comrade's Confession

From a drawing by George Cruikshank.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

dered. On asking, then, that he be allowed to go below for his clothes, permission was granted, but instead of getting his clothing he ran to the carpenter's bench, picked up an axe, and

The United States Frigate *Essex*.

From a lithograph at the Naval Academy, Annapolis.

deliberately chopping off his left hand, he carried it on deck and threw it at the feet of the British lieutenant, saying he would cut off his foot also before he would serve again in the British navy. As he was no longer able to do duty as a sailor the lieutenant left him.

Digitized by Google

Lest these stories seem to the humane reader to exaggerate the horrors of life on a British naval ship, the following facts from the London "Annual Register" for 1781 (page 41 of "Principal Occurrences") will be found conclusive: The total number of men "raised" for the navy, 1776 to 1780, was 170,928. Of these, 1,243 only were killed by the enemy, while 18,545 "died," and 42,069 *deserted.* More than ten per cent. of all who were "raised" "died," while almost one-fourth of them all succeeded in deserting, in spite of the rigors of the imprisonment into which they were carried.

It is necessary to give figures relating to the Revolutionary period instead of the era of the War of 1812, because British officials have absolutely refused to publish any such statistics since 1800.

What bearing all these facts have on the War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain, if not plain already, will very soon appear. Animated by the belief that "our maritime supremacy is in fact a part of the law of nations," and by the further belief that "America certainly cannot pretend to wage war with us; she has no navy to do it with," the British naval officers kidnapped English-speaking sailors wherever they were found, even when these sailors were confessedly born citizens of the United States. The British

Digitized by Google

government did, indeed, rule that where an American (natural-born) had a certificate from the American government attesting his nativity —where he could, by documentary evidence, prove his nativity—he might be excused by the British "recruiting" gangs, but the rule was, in fact, a mere diplomatic subterfuge for use should policy at any time require a "disavowal." In actual practice the only judge of a man's citizenship was the recruiting officer of the short-handed ship, and the lithe-limbed Yankee sailor was just the kind of a man the British press-gang was looking for. In fact, the British periodicals of that day continuously scoffed at these citizenship papers, and it was asserted in Parliament, as well as by the press, that the American naval officers, as well as naval officials stationed on shore, deliberately issued false papers at every opportunity—in short, that the Americans, as a nation, were liars, perjurers, and forgers.

As early as 1747, when Massachusetts was a colony in most peaceful relations with the home government, a press-gang caused a bloody riot on the streets of Boston, where press-gangs were "already stigmatized as barbarous by public opinion." Indeed, one of the irritations leading to the hostilities begun in 1775 was the work of the press-gang. The war of the Revolution forever settled the question of

Digitized by Google

the *right* of the British government to impress an American, but instead of stopping such violations of the rights of a free-minded people it rather increased them. For the hatred and contempt which the British felt toward the Americans as a people during that war was intensified by the result of it. It was the personal pleasure of the British officer to get these Yankees where he could make them feel his power. It is on record (see "Life of Elder Joseph Bates") that the British officers were particular to see that these Americans took off their hats when the band played "God Save the King," and that a common form of address was "Here, you damned Yankee scoundrel," do this or that. That the "damned Yankee scoundrel" was triced up and flogged on the slightest provocation by these officers, who confessedly enjoyed seeing flesh creep under the lash, scarcely need be said.

No sooner was the war of the Revolution over and American merchant ships free to sail to British ports than the outrages began on the American seamen. It was literally true that the United States had no navy and could not wage war with England. We did not have even one ship-of-war left to carry the flag, and the party that ruled the nation then was utterly opposed to building one. It called itself the party of the people—it was fearful lest some-

Digitized by Google

thing or somebody enslave the people—but when the friends of American seamen, shanghaied into the barbarous slavery of a British warship, protested, this "liberty-loving" party pigeon-holed the documents. But let us be just in this matter. It was the liberty-loving party that did at last declare war. The opposition preferred to trust in "the humanity" and "sense of justice" which the offending nation was supposed to possess.

So the press-gangs worked on merrily. Not only was the American walking in the street of a foreign city in immediate danger; the American ships on the high seas were stopped and stripped of their crews. The British ships even lay to off New York, Boston, and other American ports to intercept American merchantmen, from which seamen were taken until they were so short-handed that they were lost. The American seamen were left to face death by shipwreck, as they were disciplined to death on the decks of British naval warships. And because they were lithe and quick-witted —because they more readily devised means for escape from this slavery than others—they were transferred to the ships doing duty on the coasts of Africa and in the East Indies, just as American prisoners captured during the war of the Revolution were sent to and compelled to serve on those stations.

Digitized by Google

As the *Edinburgh Review* for November, 1812, admitted, "they were dispersed in the remotest quarter of the globe, and not only exposed to the perils of service, but *shut out, by their situation, from all hope of ever being reclaimed.*" They were doomed to slavery for life.

How the indignation was of slow growth—so slow, indeed, that it needed the outrages of the Barbary pirates to stir it even to the feeblest blaze—has already been told in the story of the origin of the new navy. But at last a majority of two was found for a resolution of the Congress declaring that a seaside nation ought to have a navy, and so a navy was built—a navy so small in numbers as to be absolutely insignificant when compared with that whose "supremacy is in fact a part of the law of nations." It was built of American oak, manned by American seamen, and sent afloat with the American flag flying from every mast. It did good—it did the best kind of work—but when the Barbary pirates were cowed it was reduced "to a peace footing." There was never an effort made with it to resent the enslaving of American seamen. So the aggressions increased continually. And the politicians talked. They talked about the illegal confiscation of American ships under the decrees and orders of the French and

Digitized by Google

English governments—they were more concerned about the dollars than the liberties of the people—and finally when war seemed inevitable, they seriously discussed the advisability of abandoning the seacoast to the expected invaders! The chatter about no European enemy being able to find a permanent footing on the broad American soil, where so many millions of freemen were to be ready with squirrel rifles and shotguns to repel him, was quite as common at the beginning of the nineteenth century as it is at the end of it. The word "jingo" was not in use in those days. But the men who asserted that government existed solely in order that the power of the whole people should be exerted to protect every individual in all his rights wherever in the wide world he might find himself, heard plenty of equally opprobrious epithets applied to them. And the utmost that was done for the sake of national honor was the building of a lot of boats for "harbor-defence."

And then came a day when, to the injury that had been done unceasingly, was added insult, the memory of which to this day brings the hot blush of shame as well as the flood-tide of indignation to the brow of every American patriot.

It was on the 16th of November, 1798. As the reader will remember, this nation was then

Digitized by Google

actually at war with France, although no formal declaration of war had been made. The French ship *Croyable*, of fourteen guns, had been captured, taken into the American service under the name of *Retaliation*, and recaptured by the French ship *Insurgent*. Because of these troubles a fleet of sixty American merchant ships had gathered at Havana to await a convoy, and the *Constellation*, Capt. Thomas Truxton, and the *Baltimore*, Capt. Isaac Phillips, were sent to bring them home.

This service having been performed in satisfactory manner, the *Baltimore* was sent alone to convoy a smaller fleet from Charleston back to Havana.

On November 16, 1798, while *en route* on this passage, the convoy fell in with a British squadron consisting of two seventy-four-gun ships-of-the-line, one ninety-eight-gun ship-of-the-line, and two thirty-two-gun frigates. Because both Great Britain and the United States were then at war with France, the two nations were, of course, allies at this time. Nevertheless, knowing that the British ships were sure to be anxious for more sailors, Captain Phillips signalled his fleet to square away before the wind, and so get out of reach, while he bore up to have a talk with the Englishmen.

On arriving near the flagship—the *Carnatic*, Captain Loring—Captain Phillips pulled over

Digitized by Google

to her in his gig. He was received with the usual civilities, and then was coolly informed that every man on board the *Baltimore* who did not carry the government certificate that he was an American citizen would be impressed into the British service.

A ship of the American navy was to be treated as merchant ships had been treated.

Captain Phillips protested, and said he would surrender his ship first. Then he returned to the *Baltimore*, where he found a British lieutenant already on deck and mustering the crew.

No form of protest was of any avail. Everything said or done excited only the contemptuous smile of the lieutenant, and in the end, being overpowered by the great ship-of-the-line squadron, Captain Phillips had the humiliation of seeing five of his men impressed in the British service.

Meantime Captain Loring had taunted Captain Phillips with the statement that there were already a number of impressed American citizens in the *Carnatic's* crew.

And all that the American government did in the matter was to dismiss the unfortunate Phillips from the service—dismiss him as a scapegoat for the scurvy sins of those really responsible for the disgrace that had fallen upon the navy. For Phillips very well knew

Digitized by Google

how the administration had pigeon-holed the complaints of the friends of kidnapped seamen —knew very well that the Navy Department could not be depended on to support him in resenting such aggression.

In one respect Phillips deserved his punishment—he had sworn to defend the flag, and he did not fire a gun. Not only should he have cleared his ship for action; it was his duty to fight, Nicholas-Biddle fashion, until the last plank was shot from under his feet.

Humiliated as every patriot was when the story of this outrage was spread over the nation, greater and lingering shame was in store. Not only did the outrages on American commerce increase as the years passed on; a still heavier blow was to fall on the face of American manhood. A British ship was to shoot an American ship to pieces in order to recapture four impressed Americans who had succeeded in escaping from the slavery they had endured—the British frigate *Leopard* was to assault the *Chesapeake* on the high seas in time of peace.

But before that attack another was made that was less aggravating than the one on the *Baltimore*, only because it was the second of its kind—because, being the second, the American people may be supposed to have been somewhat accustomed to their humiliation. This

Digitized by Google

was on June 12, 1805. Lieut. James Lawrence —he had his revenge afterward in the *Hornet-Peacock* fight—was carrying a small gunboat to the Mediterranean to help in the war with the pirates. Off Cadiz he had the misfortune to fall in with the British fleet under Admiral Collingwood, when three of his men were taken from him. That the administration at Washington (it was during Mr. Jefferson's second term) rested easily under the outrage is plain from the fact that only the briefest mention of it is made in any history. The impressment of Americans was such a common, such an every-day, occurrence that the fact of three taken from a national ship was, to use a newspaper reporter's expression, worth only a three-line jotting.

And another three-line jotting is devoted to what is called the *Leander* affair. A British squadron was cruising off Sandy Hook on what is, in these years, the favorite American ground for yacht races. They were lying in wait, as was their custom, for American ships, from which they could gather in seamen. When a little American sloop came along on April 25, 1806, "a shot was recklessly fired from one of them, the *Leander*." It is fair to suppose that this shot was fired as a joke on the sloop's crew. If one recalls the undisputed character of such men as Lieutenant Hope of the *Macedonian*,

Digitized by Google

already described, one may readily believe that the average British officer of that day would have thought it a good joke to scare a sloop's crew by firing a cannon-ball across her deck. The gunner on the *Leander*, to make the joke as laughable as possible, aimed carefully. His shot killed the man at the tiller.

When the people of New York learned the facts through the return of the sloop, the local excitement was very great. All the vessels in the harbor hoisted their flags at half-mast on the day the body was buried, while the Tammany Society attended the funeral in a body. So Mr. Jefferson's government felt constrained to protest. At that, Captain Whitby, who commanded the *Leander*, was taken through the form of a court-martial, unanimously acquitted of wrong-doing *and promoted.*

The crowning outrage, however, came in the year 1807. Early in that year a squadron of British warships had congregated in the mouth of Chesapeake Bay to blockade some Frenchmen lying at Annapolis. The American Congress had granted an appropriation meantime (though with stingy hand) for enough seamen to man the frigate *Chesapeake*, that was to be sent out under Capt. Charles Gordon to the Mediterranean, where she was to take the place of the *Constitution.* She was to carry Com-

Digitized by Google

CAPT HENRY WHITBY.R.N.

Digitized by Google

modore James Barron with her (his real title was captain), and he was to command at the Mediterranean station.

The *Chesapeake* was partly fitted out at Washington, and then she dropped down to Norfolk to complete her preparations for sea, and ship enough men to fill her crew. While she was still lying at Washington seven men applied at the recruiting station in Norfolk, who said they were American citizens—who made oath to that statement, in fact, and were permitted to sign as members of the crew of the *Chesapeake*, and they were sent on to join the ship then at Washington. Soon after this it appeared that three of the men had deserted from the British warship *Melampus* and four from the *Halifax*. Just how the fact that they were deserters became known is not definitely stated, but from the details given and from the manifest ill-temper of the British officers in the doings that followed, it is reasonable to suppose that at least one of these seven men met some of the British officers on shore, and feeling safe under the American flag, ventured to reply, in disrespectful manner, to remarks made by the officers. There is, indeed, no doubt the officers were defied and, so, deeply offended.

In those days one Erskine represented the British government at Washington. He tried

Digitized by Google

to have the seven deserters returned to the ships from which they came. Now, in spite of the fact that the British officers were in those days diligently engaged in kidnapping American-born sailors from American ships, the American Navy Department had issued strict orders to the recruiting officers "to enlist no British subjects known to be such." And, further, it must be said that there was no law authorizing an American commander to deliver up deserters from foreign navies when found in American ships. Nevertheless, an investigation was made as to the antecedents of the seven men, and then it was discovered that the British officials were wholly unable to prove that any one of them was a British subject. More important still, it was proved that instead of having voluntarily shipped in the British navy, the three men who had deserted from the *Melampus* had been kidnapped from an American merchant ship in the Bay of Biscay. Two of them were natives of Maryland, and one, although born in South America, had come to Massachusetts when a child and had there become a lawful citizen of the United States. The names of the three were William Ware, Daniel Martin, and John Strachan, and all were colored. As to the four from the *Halifax*, it was not proved where they were born except as they swore they were of Ameri-

Digitized by Google

can birth, but very likely three of them were of English birth, for they deserted the *Chesapeake* and disappeared. The fourth appears in history both as Jenkin Ratford and as John Wilson. He was a white man and, unfortunately for himself, he remained on the ship.

Because the three men were definitely proved to be American citizens, and because there was nothing to disprove Ratford's oath that he too was one, the Navy Department refused to surrender the men, and the diplomatic correspondence was closed. The American authorities having received no protest after the decision was rendered, supposed that the matter was dropped altogether.

And that was a very grave error on the part of the American authorities. For so great was the arrogance of the British naval officers, and so strong was their contempt for the American government and people, that they determined to take the men by force from the deck of the *Chesapeake* as soon as she had passed out to sea, and an order was issued by Admiral Berkeley commanding any British captain who found the *Chesapeake* at sea to board her, whether she would permit it or not, and take the men.

Naturally that order was kept secret, and Captains Barron and Gordon (Barron, by the fact of his rank, was the responsible official)

Digitized by Google

had no idea that any real ill feeling existed, let alone that any intention to assault the ship was meditated. There was, indeed, some grumbling by British officers at Norfolk, and the officers of the *Chesapeake* heard of it, but there was not enough in it to excite their suspicions.

And so the 22d day of June, 1807, arrived, and the *Chesapeake* was, after a most remarkable fashion, ready for sea. She set her pennant, got up her anchor, and with her decks littered with baggage, chicken coops—what not—and her rammers, wads, matches, and powder-horns stowed no one knew where, she sailed away.

Meantime, while yet the *Chesapeake's* anchor had not been gotten, the crew of the big British fifty-gun ship *Leopard* had made sail and gone to sea slowly—so slowly that she kept the *Chesapeake* constantly in sight.

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon the *Leopard* brought to near the *Chesapeake* and hailed her, saying that the officers and crew wished to send letters by her to friends in Europe. It was a common practice for warships as well as merchantmen to carry letters in that fashion, and the *Chesapeake* backed her mainyards and waited for the boat from the *Leopard*. When the boat came, a British lieutenant climbed to the deck of the *Chesapeake*, and then, instead of

Digitized by Google

producing a package of letters, he drew forth a written demand from his captain for the return of the sailors alleged to be British subjects. With this demand he also presented a copy of the circular issued by his admiral which ordered any British ship falling in with the *Chesapeake* to take the so-called deserters from her by force if necessary. Captain Barron was very much surprised, but he refused to deliver up the men.

Meantime the *Leopard* had worked into the most advantageous position for attacking the *Chesapeake*, and with her ports open, cannon out, and matches lighted, she awaited the issue of the demand.

The lieutenant returned to his ship. Captain Humphreys of the *Leopard* mounted the rail and shouted :

"Commodore Barron must be aware that the orders of the admiral must be obeyed."

No reply was made to this, and the words were repeated. A shot was fired across the bows of the *Chesapeake*. Another one was fired in like manner, and then a whole broadside was discharged directly at the American ship.

Being wholly unprepared for action, the *Chesapeake* could make no reply, and for twelve minutes (some accounts say fifteen) she lay there helpless while the British seamen worked their guns. Her masts, rigging, and sails were

Digitized by Google

CAPT.ⁿ SALUSBURY PRYCE HUMPHREYS. R.N.

Digitized by Google

shot to pieces. Three men were killed and eighteen wounded, Captain Barron being among the wounded.

It was deliberate, cold-blooded murder, done to compel three American citizens to return to the slavery on a British ship into which they had been kidnapped. And it succeeded in its object.

Being, as said, wholly unprepared, no defence was made, and when Captain Barron saw that his crew were being killed uselessly, he hauled down his flag. Lieut. William H. Allen, on the *Chesapeake*, did manage to fire one gun by means of a coal carried in his bare hands from the galley fire, and the ball hulled the *Leopard*, but the flag was already down to the rail, and it was done only as a matter of honor.

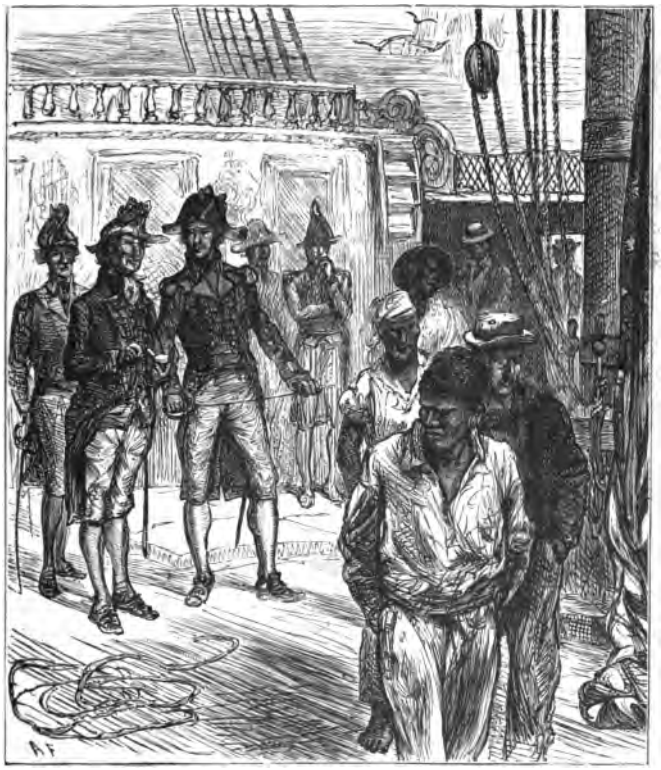
So the crew of the *Chesapeake* were mustered on deck, the triumphant lieutenant returned, the four "deserters" were bundled over the rail into the British boat, and the *Chesapeake* was left, with her dead and wounded, to work her riddled sails in the course back to Norfolk.

The *Leopard* sailed on. The unfortunate Jenkin Ratford was hanged at the fore yard-arm, and the three who were acknowledged to be kidnapped American citizens were sentenced to receive 500 lashes from the cat.

And what does the uninformed reader sup-

Digitized by Google

pose the political leaders of the American republic did about it? They tore the Eagle from the American coat-of-arms and substituted the



Taking Deserters from the *Chesapeake.*

Porcupine—they asked the British government to disavow the act of Admiral Berkeley, and they ordered the building of 188 more gunboats for harbor defence!

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX TO VOLUME I

PAY OF NAVAL SEAMEN IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE NAVY AS A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, $125 a month. Officers of a ship of twenty guns and upward: captain, $60; lieutenant, $30; master, $30; surgeon, $25; chaplain, $20; midshipman, $12; gunner, $15; seaman, $8.

Officers of a ship of ten to twenty guns: captain, $48; lieutenant, $24; master, $24; surgeon, $21.66; midshipman, $12; gunner, $13; seaman, $8.

The pay of the following was the same in any class of cruisers: armorer, $15; sailmaker, $12; yeoman, $9; quartermaster, $9; quarter-gunner, $8; coxswain, $9; cook, $12.

Commanders were allowed $4 and $5 a week for rations, and lieutenants, captains of marines, surgeons, and chaplains, $4

Prize money coming to the officers and seamen of the Continental navy was divided in shares: captains, 6; first lieutenant, 5; second lieutenant, 4; surgeon, 4; master, 3; steward, 2; mate, 1½; gunner, 1½; boatswain, 1½; gunner's mate, 1½; sergeant, 1½; privates, 1.

Maclay notes that the first system of uniforms was adopted for the Continental navy on the 5th of September, 1776, when the Marine Committee decided that the uniform for the officers of the navy should be as follows:

Digitized by Google

Captains, a coat of blue cloth with red lapels, slashed cuffs, a stand-up collar, flat yellow buttons, blue breeches, and a red waistcoat with yellow lace. The uniform for lieutenants consisted of a blue coat with red lapels, a round cuff faced, a stand-up collar, yellow buttons, blue breeches, and a plain red waistcoat. Masters were to have a blue coat with lapels, round cuffs, blue breeches, and a red waistcoat; while midshipmen had a blue coat with lapels, a round cuff faced with red, a stand-up collar, with red at the buttons and buttonholes, blue breeches, and a red waistcoat. The marines were to have a green coat faced with white, round cuffs, slashed sleeves and pockets, with buttons around the cuff, a silver epaulet on the right shoulder, skirts turned back, buttons to suit the facings, white waistcoat and breeches edged with green, black gaiters and garters. The men were to have green shirts "if they can be procured."

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

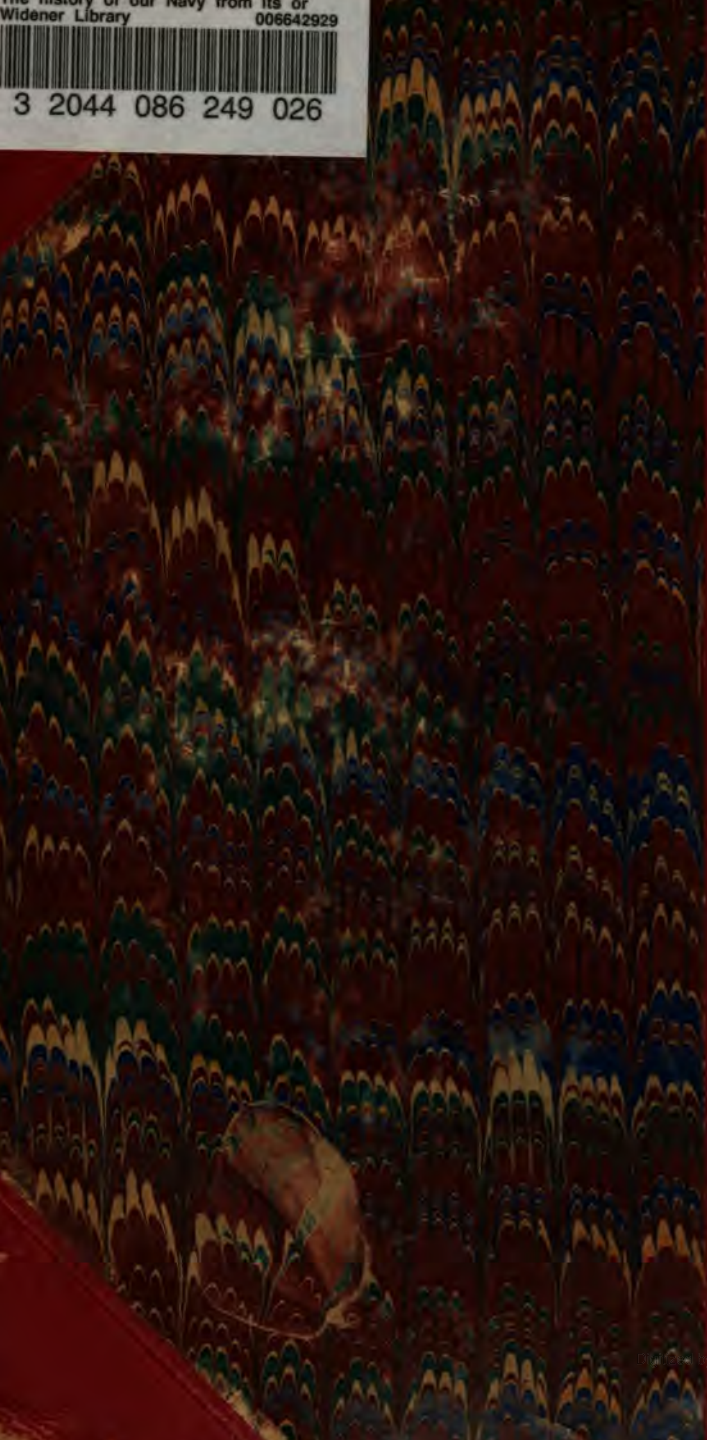
THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED AN OVERDUE FEE IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW. NON-RECEIPT OF OVERDUE NOTICES DOES NOT EXEMPT THE BORROWER FROM OVERDUE FEES.

FEB 9 1988
CANCELLED
OCT 18 1988

WIDENER
BOOK DUE
CANCELLED
MAR 21 1989

Digitized by Google

The history of our Navy from its or
Widener Library
006642929
3 2044 086 249 026



Digitized by Google